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A MORAL PROOF OF THE CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE STATE.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
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THE PREFACE.

THE *Humour of* thinking *and* writing freely *upon the Subject of* Religion *being now carried to that Pitch, that neither* Reaſon *can* correct

nor Law put a Stop *to it*; *the beſt way to anſwer all Cavils and Objections, and to determine all Controverſies and Diſputes upon this important Matter will be, to* begin all a new; *to lay aſide all* Prejudices *and* Prepoſſeſſions, *both* for *and* againſt Religion; *and to ſuppoſe ourſelves juſt now entring upon the Enquiry, whether there be any ſuch thing or no?*

And whoever will put himſelf into this Situation muſt immediately be convinced, that the Firſt Queſtion *to be reſolved is, whether there be* any Future State *appointed for Man; whether, after this Life ended, we ſhall ever live again, and be ſenſible of* Happineſs *or* Miſery hereafter? *For, if there be no ſuch State, then (as it will plainly appear*

pear from the following Diſcourſe) we have no occaſion to enquire any farther, and all the glorious Things which have been ſpoken of Religion, Reaſon, *and* Truth *will be wiped out and defaced. But if we are once convinced, that there will be a* Future State of Happineſs and Miſery; *this one Principle will eaſily lead us into all neceſſary Truths, and moſt of thoſe* Religious Difficulties, *which ſeemed formidable before, will vaniſh before us.*

The Proof of this ſingle Point *is here attempted, in ſuch a manner as no* Free-Thinker *can object to. And, if any of them can be brought to a ſerious Belief of this* one Article, *it will, I am perſuaded, be no hard matter to give him Satisfaction upon any other*

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head relating to Religion, *from whatever* common Principles of Reaſon *he himſelf ſhall think fit to lay down.*

A few Copies of this Diſcourſe were printed about ſeven Years agoe, and communicated only to ſome particular Friends of the Author, without any intention then of making it more publick: But ſeveral other Diſcourſes of the like nature and tendency having been lately publiſhed, and the thoughts of People being at preſent earneſtly engaged in Enquiries into the firſt Principles *both of* Natural and Revealed Religion; *'tis humbly hoped, that this ſmall Treatiſe may, at* this time, *contribute ſomething toward promoting the ſame good ends which are aimed at by thoſe Learned Writers, who by the late bold Attempts*

tempts of Unbelievers *have been called out to defend our* common Faith ; *and who have done it (as far as I can judge) with* greater ſtrength *and* clearneſs of Reaſoning, *than was ever done before.*

ERRATA.

PAge 28. Line 24. for *the* read *they*. P. 80. Line laſt, for *And* read *The*. P. 81. Line 2. for *narrow as* read *narrow a*.

A MORAL

The PREFACE.

A MORAL PROOF OF THE CERTAINTY OF A *FUTURE STATE.*

THE Notion of a *Future State*, in which Men will be *rewarded*, or *punished*, according to what they have done in this Life, is so agreeable to the common Reason of Mankind, that the wisest among the *Heathen* believed it upon

the Strength of mere *natural* Principles only, without any Aſſiſtance from *Revelation*. And now ſince *Life and Immortality are brought to Light through the Goſpel*, not only the *Wiſe and Prudent*, but the *Simple and Unlearned*, are fully ſatisfy'd of the Truth of this Doctrine. This is the main Article of a *Chriſtian*'s *Faith*, the Foundation of all his Hopes, and the End of all his Labours.

The *Scriptures* indeed are exceeding plain in this Point; ſo that whoever admits the Teſtimony of theſe ſacred Writings, muſt needs believe a *Reſurrection to eternal Life*: But then it is to be obſerved, that the Plainneſs of the Revelation is, it ſelf, one great Occaſion why this *neceſſary* and *fundamental* Article of all Religion is more queſtioned now than ever it was: The Reaſon of which is, that the Miſery and Torment prepared for Sinners, in another World, is every where throughout the *New Teſtament* ſet forth and repreſented to us under ſuch lively and affecting Figures, and with ſuch Circumſtances of Terror and Deſpair; and the Threats of Divine Vengeance are ſo ſolemn and peremptory, that thoſe who cannot live up to the Rules of the Goſpel are diſpoſed to ſay, that *God hath not ſpoken to us at all in times paſt*; that ſo they may

may avoid the Obligation of believing that he will *judge us at the Laſt Day.*

It is in vain therefore to reaſon with ſuch Men of *Judgment to come,* out of *Scripture*; the only way to convince them of the Certainty of a future State is, to prove it to them from ſuch Principles as are common to all Mankind; ſuch as lie within every Man's reach, and ſuch as they muſt acknowledge and feel in themſelves to be true, without any *external Authority,* or *Influence,* to direct them. And, were ſuch Conviction once thoroughly wrought in them, all their other Objections to the *revealed Word of God* would eaſily be removed.

Many are the Arguments ſuggeſted to us by *natural Reaſon,* and made uſe of both by *Heathens* and *Chriſtians,* to prove the *Immortality* of Man; but none can poſſibly have more Weight with a rational Creature than ſuch as are taken from the Conſideration of the *End* and *Deſign of his Being.* This is the peculiar Diſtinction, and boaſted Privilege of our Nature, to guide our ſelves, to direct our own Ways, to *chuſe the Good, and refuſe the Evil:* But this cannot be done without pointing our Actions to ſome End or other: In order therefore to act *reaſonably,*

it is of the firſt Importance to us to conſider, what is *the beſt* or *moſt proper End* we ought to aim at.

The wiſeſt among the Ancients of every ſort, who owned a *God*, believed him to be the *Author* and *Maker* of all other things; the immediate Conſequence of which Opinion was, that every thing was ordered by him for ſome *wiſe End* or Purpoſe. And even thoſe who ſuppoſed every thing to exiſt *without* either *Beginning*, or *Cauſe*; and thoſe alſo who aſcribed the Original of all things to ſome *other Cauſe* beſides *God*, did all agree in this, that every Being in the World, however it came to exiſt, had ſome particular End to which it was directed, and which, by its natural Frame and Diſpoſition, it was fitted to attain. But, if we ſet aſide the Conſideration of a *Future State*, it will neceſſarily follow, that Man was neither *made by God*, nor *made to any End or Purpoſe at all*. Which monſtrous Abſurdities are no otherwiſe to be avoided than by acknowledging the Truth of this Propoſition, *viz.* that *the true End of Man, and the only Reaſon of humane Life aſſignable, is, to ſerve God here, in order to be happy in his Favour hereafter.*

This alone (if it can be proved) is ſufficient to demonſtrate *the Certainty and Neceſſity, of a future State.* And this I ſhall endeavour to make good in the following Diſcourſe.

I. By a poſitive and direct Proof, taken from the Nature of Man, and the Circumſtances of his Condition in this World.

II. By ſhewing, that all other Ends, which Men do, or can, propoſe to themſelves, are either unſuitable and improper, or unattainable.

III. By obſerving, that all the common Judgments of Mankind, relating to their Being and Conduct in this World, which have hitherto been reckoned unqueſtionable, if there be no future State, muſt be pronounced falſe.

I. In the firſt place then I am to make out the Truth of this Propoſition, *viz.* that *the true End of Man, and the only Reaſon of human Life aſſignable, is, to ſerve God here, in order to be happy in his Favour hereafter*; by a poſitive direct Proof, taken from *the Nature of Man,* and the Circumſtances of his *Condition* in this World.

And, wherever we turn our Thoughts, which way ſoever we direct our Enquiries, this Re-

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ſlection will offer it ſelf. Whatever View we take of Man, we ſhall find the Proſpect continually enlarging upon us, till it open into *another World*. But, if that be only an *imaginary* State, then every thing we meet with here will come under the Character either of *Myſtery*, or *Deluſion*, and we ſhall be ſure of nothing but *Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit*. For, unleſs we are to live again, it is impoſſible to give any tolerable Reaſon why we ever *exiſted at all:* Except this be allowed, we can never explain why we were *made* and faſhioned *after ſuch a manner:* And, ſhould we ſuppoſe the contrary, many of the *Capacities*, *Inclinations*, and *Deſires* of our Nature, muſt be accounted utterly uſeleſs and vain. If there be no future State, the Foundations of all *Virtue* and *Religion* will be entirely overthrown: And not only ſo, but many of our *Sins* alſo will then appear more unreaſonable and extravagant than now they do.

To ſhew this more particularly; let us conſider firſt the *Shortneſs*, and *Uncertainty*, of human Life. When the Days of Man are ſaid to be *as Graſs*, *as a Shadow*, *as a Tale that is told*, we conſent to the Compariſons that they are juſt, and we acknowledge all the Reſemblances of this Nature to be true: But

which way ſhall we account for this Truth? How is it poſſible to imagine, that ſuch a ſcanty uncertain Term of Being, as we now enjoy, is all that belongs to us, and that we are to have no other Portion or Inheritance but this? Upon ſuch a Suppoſition theſe Queſtions will be always asked, and never reſolved: What mean all thoſe Faculties of *Reaſoning* and *Reflection* that we are conſcious of, when we have not room to employ them in? Why were we endued with *Wiſdom from on high*, and why was *the Spirit of Counſel and Underſtanding* given us? only to lengthen out the ſcanty Meaſure of a Span, and to add a few Words to an inſipid Tale? Had this been all our Buſineſs here, why was not our Sight bounded accordingly? If Man were made for this Life only, and not deſign'd to aim at any thing beyond it, why were not all his Deſires and Expectations confined within the Compaſs of his Being? When the Time allotted us to appear in is but a Span long, why are we continually reaching out into Eternity, and never ſatisfyed with any thing leſs than *infinite?* When we have attained to the Age of Man, what means that Deſire of living on? Why do we put the Thoughts of Death far from us, and do what we can to nouriſh in

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our ſelves the Hopes of Immortality? Were there no future State appointed for us, the Wiſdom of him that made us would have ſo ordered it, that we ſhould neither have feared to die, nor deſired to live, beyond the Time allotted us. He would likewiſe have faſhioned our Thoughts after ſuch a manner, that we ſhould have had no Deſigns or Purſuits but what were proper to this Life, and lay within our reach: We ſhould have been fully ſatisfied with whatever we were capable of doing, or procuring, for our ſelves, without extending our Endeavours or Deſires any farther: We ſhould not then have look'd upon what had paſt, before we had a Beginning; nor ſhould we have reached forward into the Ages to come, and deſired to live for ever: We ſhould not have perceived that we *were but of Yeſterday*, and were to be *gone to Morrow*; but, our Thoughts being all confined to the preſent Time, we ſhould have walked ſtreight on in the way we were in, without knowing from whence we ſet out, or whither we were going. Nay, had our Days been ſhortned into Hours, we ſhould have been as well contented with the Term aſſigned us; and none of the many Accidents that now continually threaten our Life, would have given

given us the leaſt Apprehenſion of our being cut off before our Time.

Thus it is reaſonable to think we ſhould have been made and diſpoſed, if there were no other Life but this; ſo that, had our ſtay here been never ſo ſhort and uncertain, it would have been all one to us: becauſe we ſhould not then have had the Misfortune of knowing the Difference between a ſhorter and a longer Period. But now we find our ſelves very uneaſy under theſe Thoughts, and we are amazed to conſider, that we ſhould be ſo curiouſly wrought and put together, and at the ſame time continually ſubject to be broken into Duſt again, and ſcattered upon the Face of the Earth; that it ſhould be ſo long before we come to our Strength, and ſo much longer before we attain to any conſiderable Degrees of Knowledge; that, during this time, ſo much Care and Aſſiſtance ſhould be neceſſary to bring us up to ſuch a State; and that, after all, when we have eſcaped innumerable Dangers in getting thus far, we ſhould have but a ſhort while to enjoy the Fruits of our own and other Peoples Labours, and ſhould be conſtantly expoſed to freſh Hazards of being ſnatch'd away, before we come to thoſe Bounds which we are ſure we cannot paſs.

But, had we a longer and more certain Continuance here, the next Enquiry will be, Why were we born to *Trouble?* Why are we always desiring, and reaching out after Happiness, and yet constantly subject to *Pain* and *Misery?* And what means all that *Calamity* and *Affliction* that befalls the Children of Men? *If in this Life only we have Hope*, if there be no *Recompence* or *Reward* to be expected hereafter; there is no tolerable Account to be given why we are so ill provided for in this World. Had we no Prospect of a future Inheritance, it is most reasonable to believe, that our present Portion would have been better than it now is; that the few Days we had to live would have past away without Trouble or Sorrow; and that we should all have been pleased with the good things that were set before us, and have been always easy and well satisfyed with the Condition we were in, whatever it was.

This undoubtedly is most suitable to all the Notions we have of what is *regular* and *just*. And thus we find it ordered in all the other parts of Nature. There are no other Beings, within our Observation, which are liable to Sorrow and Affliction but *Man*; at least he is the only Being that knows himself to be miserable,

miſerable, and is capable of complaining that he is ſo. For, whatever Pain we can ſuppoſe the *Beaſts that periſh* feel, it is all in preſent: They have no Concern for what is paſt, nor any Apprehenſions of what is to come. And, if we were to periſh in the ſame manner as they do, why ſhould not our Condition be like theirs, in this Reſpect alſo? Why ſhould we be diſpoſed to enquire into the Conſequences of things? and to conſider what may happen to us, at a great Diſtance off? And why are our Souls diſquieted within us, by the Fears and Apprehenſions of Evils to come; if there were not ſome future Diſpenſation, which concerned us more, and deſerved to be more in our Thoughts, than any thing, about which we are now employed can do? And what Reaſon can be alledged, why we ſhould be troubled for any thing that is paſt, and which, by being paſt, could not poſſibly create us the leaſt Uneaſineſs, without our own Reflection upon it? This is no ways to be explained, without allowing ſuch a thing as *Guilt*. Were we not capable of acting ill, and liable to be puniſhed for it, we ſhould never be conſcious of any Pain or Anguiſh for what we had done. For either our Actions would be forgotten, as ſoon as paſt; or

we ſhould be as eaſy in remembring, as we were in doing them. But now, the *Memory* of our paſt Actions often diſturbs us; and we are often wiſhing that we had done otherwiſe than we did: Which would be perfectly in vain, and to no purpoſe, if we had never done what was *Evil*, and were not obnoxious to *Puniſhment*. But, upon a Suppoſition that we have *ſinned*, and done wickedly, the preſent Pain, which ariſes from Reflection, is not only a ſuitable Puniſhment for our Offence, but a proper Method of exciting us to *repent* of the Evil, and to take more Care to avoid the like for the future, *leſt ſome worſe thing come unto us*. Upon theſe Grounds, it is very fit and reaſonable for us, to be concerned for what is paſt; but, if there be no ſuch things as *Sin*, and *Puniſhment*, then is all our Trouble of this kind vain, and *Memory* and *Reflection* ſerve only to create us unneceſſary and unaccountable Torments.

Another common Obſervation, which leads us into the Belief of a *future State*, is, the natural Averſion we have to *Death*, and the ſtrong Deſire we find in our ſelves to continue our Being for ever.

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This we are ſenſible of in all the various Circumſtances of our Condition here. For, let a Man's Life be never ſo long, and eaſy, he will always deſire to live, and to be eaſy, longer. And, let him abound as much as he will in all the good things of this World, he will never have enjoyed ſo much of them, as to be able to quit them all freely, and to depart, as a Man riſes from a Feaſt, full and ſatisfied. And on the other hand, tho' our preſent Eſtate be very low and mean, tho' Difficulties and Troubles compaſs us about on every ſide; and tho' we are told, that there is no Pain or Sorrow in the Grave, that *there the Weary be at reſt*, and the Poor are free from Oppreſſion; yet are we ſolicitous to live on, and had rather cheriſh in our ſelves a faint and uncertain Hope of being happy ſome time or other, than put an end to all our Thoughts and Expectations of this Nature by Death. So that, whatever *part* we have in this *Book of Life*, it is impoſſible to ſet Bounds to our Deſires of living; and there muſt be a mighty Weight of Miſery indeed upon us, before we can perſuade our ſelves to chuſe *Death* before *Life*.

It is moreover very ſtrange to obſerve, what pains we take to fence againſt this neceſſary and unavoidable Law of *dying*: And how many

many Devices and Contrivances we have to lengthen out an imaginary Life in the Memory of other Men, when we our ſelves ſhall have no Senſe or Knowledge of any thing that is done under the Sun. This is oftentimes the chief Aim of the *Wiſe*, *the Learned*, and *the Great*, to make themſelves a Name, and to be honoured and reſpected in the Ages to come. With this View only have Statues been ſet up, Edifices erected, Books written, and many difficult and hazardous Works performed. And even the *loweſt* among the People do many things upon this poor Proſpect, that ſome body or other hereafter will thank them for what they have done, or at leaſt make ſome kind mention of them. So that nothing appears more natural, than for Men of every Rank to pleaſe themſelves with thinking, that they ſhall be remembred, and talk'd of after they are gone; that they ſhall have *Lands*, and *Houſes*, and *Children*, *that are called by their Name*; that *Poſterity* ſhall *praiſe their Sayings*; and that the Signs and Tokens of what they have done ſhall continue to many Generations. But why is all this Care and Concern employed to prolong our being without End, if we are ſhut up within the narrow Bounds of this World, and cannot

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paſs from Death to Life again? And why do we extend our Thoughts and Deſigns to what ſhall come after us, if we are going to a *Land where all things are forgotten*? Surely all theſe natural Sentiments, and Deſires, which we feel in our Souls, have ſome real Foundation, and we have ſome *future Intereſt* to purſue, however we may be miſtaken in the Nature of what we ſeek for.

And, as the *Weakneſſes*, *Imperfections*, and *Defects*, which we find in our preſent Condition, make it highly reaſonable for us to expect ſome better and more perfect State hereafter, ſo, if we take a view of Man in all his *Glory*, and conſider the moſt *noble* and *excellent Capacities of his Nature*, with all the Advantages that *Art* and *Induſtry* can give him, we ſhall from hence alſo be eaſily led to the ſame Concluſion.

For, to what End and Purpoſe are all our Endeavours after *Greatneſs* and *Perfection*; and for what Reaſon do we ſtrive to excel in *Knowledge* and *Wiſdom*; if, after all the Pains we have taken, and all the Improvements we have made, we ſhall in a very ſhort time fall back again to a level, not only with the baſeſt and moſt fooliſh of Men, but even with the Brute Creatures, and ſuch as have no

Underſtanding given them? Why are ſome Men exalted on high above their Brethren, and *cloathed* with ſo much *Majeſty* and *Honour* as to be ſtyled *Gods?* And whence comes it to paſs, that ſome are *wiſe according to the Wiſdom of an Angel of God*, when they muſt all, not only *die like other Children of Men*, but *become like the Beaſts, that periſh?* Were we not deſigned for ſome higher and more excellent Condition hereafter than what we enjoy here, we ſhould not, in all likelihood, have been thus diſtinguiſhed in this World; or, at leaſt, we ſhould not have been ſenſible of the Difference. *The Ignorant and Fooliſh* would not then have deſir'd to underſtand Knowledge; nor would *the Wiſe* have rejoyced in their Wiſdom; *the Baſe* would not have reſpected *the Honourable*, neither would the *Princes* and *mighty Men* of the Earth have gloried in their Power. For ſo we ſee it ordered among all the other Ranks of living Creatures: As they had all the ſame Original, and are all to periſh alike, ſo is their Condition much the ſame while they live: There is no *Pre-eminence* or *Superiority* eſtabliſhed among them; neither are any of them capable of deſigning to advance themſelves, or of attaining to any Degrees of Perfection

above the reſt of their kind; much leſs is one Generation of them greater or wiſer than another. And ſuch alſo, our reaſon tells us, would have been the ſtate of mankind, were there no better portion provided for them, than for their fellow creatures. Had they no *prize* to *receive* after Death, they would all *run the race* of Life with equal ſteps; none of them would *ſtrive for maſtery*, none *ſeek to excel.* There would be no *corruptible Crowns* to be obtained upon *Earth*, were there not *an incorruptible Crown laid up for us in the Heavens:* And no man would ſearch for wiſdom, were there no other *place of underſtanding*, but this *land of the living.* All the advantages that have been gained to humane Nature, by the united induſtry of Mankind, all the Dignities and Prerogatives they have aſſerted to themſelves, all the ſtock of Knowledge they have gathered together, and all the advances they have ever made towards Perfection in any kind, together with all the aſtoniſhing effects of their Power, if there be no future State, are not only uſeleſs, and vain, but render man more ridiculous and contemptible, in his own Eyes, when he ſeeth that *they which are exalted for a little while, are taken out of the way as all other, and*

cut off as the tops of the ears of corn, and all their Excellency and their Glory periſh with them.

But the truth of a *future Diſpenſation* will be rendred ſtill more evident, from all the notions of *Religion* and *Virtue* that have obtained in the World.

If God made Man, (as no doubt he did) it will eaſily be allow'd by all, that have any knowledge of God, that he made him for his own *Glory*; for he could be under no force, or obligation to exerciſe his creating Power; and he himſelf muſt be, ſome way or other, the *End*, as well as *Author*, of all his own Works. What other way then is it poſſible for Man to promote the *Glory of God*, but by *worſhipping* him, and employing thoſe Faculties which he hath given him, in the ſervice of his Maker? And how can the Almighty juſtify his Honour and Wiſdom in making Man, but by *diſtinguiſhing between him that ſerveth God, and him that ſerveth him not*; by preparing ſuch a ſtate of Life for him, as is every way ſuitable to his Nature; and by putting him into a capacity of enjoying it? Since therefore we are well aſſured, that our preſent condition in this World, is not ſuch as anſwers all the Ends and Purpoſes

poſes of our Being; it plainly follows, that God hath appointed ſome other, and better State for us.

But, if we are not to worſhip and obey God; how came the notion of ſuch a Being to be impreſſed upon our Minds? Of what uſe is it to us, that we have any Knowledge either of him, or his Laws? Why are our Souls concerned about the Nature, and ſucceſs of our Actions? And to what end do we enquire how we ſhall be diſpoſed of hereafter? If we are under no obligations of Religion, all ſuch thoughts and conſiderations as theſe are perfectly in vain, and our Souls are fooliſhly and irregularly contrived. For, upon ſuch a ſuppoſition as this, that Religion does not belong to us, we ought to have been ſo made, that it had been utterly impoſſible for us to form any Notions, or receive any Impreſſions of this kind.

As therefore we juſtly argue, that ſuch Beings, as know not God, can be under no obligation to ſerve him; ſo is it certainly true of thoſe that do know him, that they are, for that very reaſon obliged to worſhip and obey him, according to the extent of their Knowledge; becauſe otherwiſe, all their *Knowledge of God and Providence*, all their *Senſe*

of Religion, all their *Conſcience of Duty and Guilt*, would be perfectly vain and unprofitable.

And ſo would all their *Piety and Virtue* be alſo, if there never were to be any other diſpoſition of things, than what we obſerve in the common courſe of this World. For, if *the wicked* ſhould always fare as well, and oftentimes better, than *the Righteous* do, in this Life, and there never will be any other difference between them hereafter; then would it be juſt and reaſonable to ſay, *it is vain to ſerve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his Ordinance?* Why does our *Reaſon* forbid us the preſent enjoyment of many things that are agreeable to us, if there will never come a time when we ſhall be made amends for our *Self-denyal?* Why ſhould we ſpend the ſhort time of our Pilgrimage here, in conquering our Paſſions, mortifying our Luſts and Affections, and in raiſing and exalting our Minds, and rendring them as pure and ſpiritual as we can, if, as ſoon as the work be done, or perhaps before, we are cut off for ever, without receiving any fruit of all our labours? If the ſame *wages* are due to *Sin*, and *Virtue*; and *all things concerning Man have an end* in *Death*; why are our

Reaſon

Reaſon and *Inclination* contrary to one another? Why are our Minds diſtracted with different Commands? Why do not all men chuſe, and purſue the ſame things alike; or elſe agree to leave themſelves every man to his own way, and to approve of what every man does? Were there no *future State of Rewards and Puniſhments*, it is highly probable, that Reaſon and Inclination would have been always of the ſame ſide, and never have given us any trouble, by contradicting each other; we ſhould then have been ſo contrived, as to like nothing but what was proper for us; and to condemn nothing which we had once approved and done.

But, as it is now ordered, not only all our *Notions of Religion*, and *Diſpoſitions to Virtue*, but even our very *Sins and Irregularities*, plainly ſhew that we were made and deſign'd for a *future State*. Our *Pride*, *Ambition*, and *Covetouſneſs*, are built upon the natural deſires and expectations we have of ſome greater and happier Condition, than what we are capable of in this World; without which ſupport, they could have found no place in our Souls. For, what account can be given why we ſhould magnify and exalt our ſelves on high, and never think we

are

are arrived at the top of what belongs to us? or why we ſhould be continually endeavouring to enlarge our Power, to extend our Poſſeſſions, and to multiply our Wealth, without ever being ſatisfyed with what we have gained; if there be nothing in nature capable of anſwering all our Deſires, and filling up the meaſure of our Hopes? Had our *Spirits* been of the ſame *original* with our *Bodies*, and were they to return to *Duſt* again, there is great reaſon to believe that *Pride* would have been *hid from Man*, and that he would never have valued himſelf above what he was. Were *all the days of Man* to be but *fourſcore*, or a hundred *Years*; he would not be heaping up Wealth, and laying in a ſtock of proviſions for many Generations, and be as diligent and buſy in this work, when he was juſt going out of the World, as he had been any time before, when he had a larger portion of Life to come; and all this to pleaſe himſelf only, without any regard at all to thoſe that were to come after him. With the ſame reaſon ought we to conclude, that, had we nothing to hope for beyond the Grave, we ſhould not be employed in ſuch Projects and Deſigns, of advancing our Condition, and eſtabliſhing our Reputation in the

World, as could not be effected in our time; the progreſs and completion of which, would be the work of many Ages, and would require the continual diligence of Poſterity to maintain. It is very plain therefore, that all the *proud*, *covetous*, and ambitious thoughts and deſires of Man, which, if there be a God, and a *future State*, are *wicked* and *puniſhable*; if there be none, are *abſurd* and *ridiculous*, and have no manner of Foundation to ſupport them. But the ſame deſires and affections, when placed upon *religious* Objects, are *juſt* and *reaſonable*; becauſe we ſhall find in *another Life*, what will fully anſwer and ſatisfy all our hopes and expectations in *this*: For there we ſhall be as *great*, and as *glorious*, and as *rich*, in all good things, as we can wiſh; and *enjoyment* ſhall then be every way proportionable to *deſire*.

If therefore *Man was made and faſhioned by God*; if there be any ſigns or tokens of *Wiſdom* diſcernible in our frame; if all thoſe *natural ſentiments*, *deſires*, and *tendencies* we have obſerved in our Souls, are not wholly *inſignificant* and *falſe*; it is very evident that the *true end* of our preſent Life, is to ſerve God here, in expectation of ſuch a State of Being hereafter, as will be in all reſpects

ſuitable

ſuitable to the deſires and capacities of our *Spiritual Nature*.

II. And as this appears plainly, by a *direct proof*, taken from the *Nature and Condition of Man*, to be the *true end* for which we were made, and to which all our actions ought to be directed; ſo I ſhall endeavour to give a fuller proof of the certainty of this Doctrine, by ſhewing, that *all other ends*, which Men do, or can propoſe to themſelves, are either *unſuitable* and *improper*, or *unattainable*.

Now, if we take a ſurvey of Man in all his thoughts and employments; we ſhall ſoon find, that there neither is, nor can be any other general end of human Purſuit, but *Life*, *Indolence*, or *Happineſs*. The two firſt of which, are not in themſelves worth our care; and the other is not attainable in this State; and therefore we muſt carry our view farther, if we would live to any purpoſe. And, if there be a future State worth our ſeeking for, there is no doubt to be made, but *Religion* is the true, and only way to it.

There are abundance of Men, who ſeem to live, only for the ſake of *Life*; whoſe whole buſineſs and deſign it is to ſupport and continue themſelves in being as long as they can, and

and to ſpin out their thread as far as it will go. *They riſe up early, and late take reſt, they go forth to their work, and to their labour, until the Evening*; and all the end of their care and trouble is, that they may have *Bread to eat*; and their *daily Bread* ſerves them to no other purpoſe, but to enable them for their *daily Labour*. This is, and hath been, in all ages, the condition of the far greateſt part of Mankind throughout the World. And can we poſſibly imagine, that this was all they were made for? Cannot we be fed, without our *taking* continual *thought for our Life?* And is it neceſſary that our *Souls* ſhould be entirely employed in providing for our *Bodies?* Let us *conſider the Ravens:* for *they neither ſow, nor reap, they neither have Storehouſe, nor Barn, and yet God feedeth them. How much more are we worſe than the Fowls*, if we have nothing elſe to do here, but to ſeek after thoſe things which are provided for *them*, without *their* care? *If the caſe be thus* with *Mankind*, what advantage do we receive from thoſe noble faculties and powers, which diſtinguiſh us from the *Beaſts that periſh?* If all our reaſoning, and foreſight, all our ſagacity and contrivance, are laid out in provi-

ding merely for *Life* and *Subſiſtance*; wherein are we better than other Creatures, who are maintained in their proper ſtate of being, an eaſier and ſurer way, without the help of *Thought* and *Reaſon?*

We muſt certainly have ſome greater occaſion for our *Souls*; and no man can be ſo abſurd as to think, that we were ſent into this world, for no other reaſon, but to labour to ſtay here as long as we can; and that we have no other buſineſs to do, while we are here, but to prop up and ſupport our *houſes of clay, whoſe foundation is in the duſt.*

In the next place therefore, let us examine the pretence of thoſe, who, to the general employment of *preſerving Life*, add the care of *living eaſy*, and *free from trouble*; who, beſides anſwering the neceſſary demands of Nature, propoſe to divert and amuſe themſelves, to put their Minds into a quiet poſture, and to keep off all troubleſome thoughts and impreſſions.

Such, we all know, is our preſent portion in this Life, that we are condemned to eat our bread, not only *in the ſweat of our face*, but *with carefulneſs and ſorrow:* So that our chief buſineſs and concern here ſeems to be, to make our burden ſit as light and eaſy upon

upon us as we can, and to get rid of the preſent trouble we feel from every ſtate we happen to be in. For ſo are we made, that, whatever work we are engaged in, we are often deſiring to ſhift our poſture; and, which way ſoever our thoughts are employed, we frequently want to have them turned into another channel. The chief ſupport of a labouring man, is the proſpect of reſt; and thoſe that are moſt buſy and active in the former part of their Lives, often propoſe no other end to themſelves, but to ſit ſtill, and be quiet in their latter days. And yet, if we continue any time idle, and undetermined; if our Souls are not conſtantly relieved, by a ſucceſſion of ſuitable objects to act upon, even *reſt*, and want of buſineſs, ſoon become grievous to us. In order therefore to remove all this pain and uneaſineſs of thought, to which we are ſubject, in every condition of Life, a thouſand ways and contrivances have been found out, which all paſs under the name of *Amuſement*; foraſmuch as the true and proper deſign of them is, not to *procure* us *pleaſure* and ſatisfaction, but only to *lay* or *prevent pain*; and they have commonly no other effect upon us, but that of keeping the Soul in an equal poiſe, or ſtate of indifference,

ſo as it is not much affected, or ſtrongly moved, any way.

This is the ſettled choice, and this is the whole aim of ſeveral men, who, in the general diſtribution of the things of this World, had a larger ſhare allotted them than others, and, who are, upon that account, exempted from all the bodily toil and labour, to which the reſt of their brethren are condemned: All the *pleaſure* they feel, or deſire, is, *not to be in pain*; they move on conſtantly in a round of little inſignificant actions; the ſame train of thoughts keeps their Minds always eaſy and unbent; and no overtures for change, though accompanyed with promiſes of greater advantage and ſatisfaction than what they now enjoy, are hearkened to, or admitted, for fear of ſome unforeſeen trouble or pain, that may poſſibly, upon the leaſt variation of their conduct, break in upon them. And what do they get by all this? To what purpoſe are they always fencing and guarding againſt *pain*? Could they be ſo fortunate, as to obtain their end; could the manage ſo, as to paſs through Life gently and ſmoothly, and to keep their Souls quiet and free from any ſhock or diſturbance, wherein would the wiſdom, and advantage of their Being appear? And what proof would

would this be, that it was for the honour of God to make them? Had men no other aim in living, but juſt to avoid the trouble and diſquiet to which they are continually expoſed, there would be very little difference to be made between *Life*, and *Death*; only *Death* would be the ſecurer ſtate of the two. If it is better *not to be at all*, than *to be miſerable*, as every body, that conſults either his Senſe, or his Reaſon, muſt confeſs; then, *not to be at all*, and *to be juſt void of trouble and pain*, are much the ſame thing; there's very little or no reaſon for preferring either condition to the other, were a choice in this caſe poſſible to be imagined: And conſequently, were there no other end of all the thoughts and actions of man but this, all that wonderful and aſtoniſhing contrivance of human Nature, which we now admire, muſt be pronounced altogether vain.

But we have nobler deſigns to boaſt of; 'tis *Happineſs* we have in view; and this, as we give out, is the end of all our deſires and purſuits. But, if we ſearch after Happineſs, without taking *Religion* and a *future State* into the account, our pretences will prove groundleſs, and our labour will all be loſt.

For,

For, *where is* Happineſs *to be found in the Land of the living?* and *who knoweth the place thereof?* The wiſeſt Men in the *old Heathen World*, who had gone the fartheſt of any in the ſearch of Truth, were not able to determine, wherein conſiſted the *chief good* of Man; whether in *Contemplation*, or *Action*; in *Motion*, or *Tranquillity*; in *conquering*, or in *gratifying our Paſſions*; in the *rational*, and *moral improvements of the Mind*, or *in the enjoyments of Senſe*. Neither are *the Childreen of this preſent Word*, how *wiſe* ſoever they may ſeem to be *in their Generation*, any better agreed in this firſt and moſt neceſſary Article, which is the foundation of all human conduct. For, in the ends which they propoſe to themſelves, ſuch *variety*, and *contradiction* is found, that they all ſtand amazed at one another's choice. Every one condemns and ridicules his Neighbour, for not living as he does; and they look upon the ſeveral views and deſigns of one another, with mutual pity and contempt.

And, as the *Notions* and *Sentiments* which Men entertain concerning their *chief Good*, are very different; ſo are alſo the *means* employed by them, for obtaining what they repreſent to themſelves under that character.

Whatever end it be that they fix upon, they are generally at a loſs to know which is the right way to it. The ſame Men are often changing their Rules and Methods of acting; and different Perſons are frequently obſerved to take the moſt contrary meaſures, in order to compaſs the ſame point. How is it then poſſible to conceive, that *the Happineſs of this World* ſhould be the *ultimate end* of all human endeavour and purſuit, when we neither know *what it is*, nor *how to obtain what we imagine it to be*. Should we ſuppoſe all Mankind *running the Race* of Life, without having any *Goal fix'd*, or *Courſe mark'd out* for them; what a wild confuſed Image would this preſent to our thoughts, of vaſt multitudes, running to and fro, in different paths, and frequently croſſing and joſtling one another; ſome enquiring which is the way, ſome turning back, others ſtriking into new Roads, none at reſt, none at the end of their Courſe, all dropping down one after another, tired and deſponding, without receiving any Prize or Reward of their continual ſtrife and labour? And yet this is but an imperfect repreſentation of the vanity and folly of all pretences to Happineſs in this Life; where neither the *end*, nor the *means* of living are certain;

tain; where no body can inform us which is our *chief Good*; or which is the *beſt way of procuring what is ſo called*, whatever it be.

But were any of the Sons of Men ſecure of both theſe points; were they wiſe enough to take *true aims*, and to *direct their ſteps aright*; yet how often are they croſſed or diſappointed in their purſuits, by ſuch accidents, as no human foreſight could prevent? How many of them are cut off, before they arrive at *the Haven where they would be*? What infinite pains, cares, and endeavours, have been thrown away by men, whoſe Happineſs hath been torn from them, or who have been ſnatched from *that*, juſt when they were entring into poſſeſſion? And after all, when the hopes, even of the wiſe and the prudent, are accompliſhed, how often does experience deſtroy the ſcene which imagination has painted? And how cloſe do wearineſs and diſguſt commonly follow after enjoyment?

Thus doth *every man walk in a vain ſhew*: ſome being always enquiring *who will ſhew them any good*; others running after every Guide they meet with, without asking any queſtions: Some being diligent and earneſt in the purſuit of what they never find; others contriving how to rid themſelves of what they have

have with great pains acquired; the beſt and wiſeſt of them complaining, that they have often been deceived, and diſappointed, have often *laboured for very Vanity*, have often *been diſquieted in vain*. But, this is not the worſt of our caſe: For Man is *born to trouble*, as well as *vanity*; Sorrow and Affliction attend us in every ſtate; and, whatever be the *portion of our Cup*, there will always be a mixture of *Bitterneſs* in it.

The *troubles* and *miſeries* of human Life, which do either immediately cleave to our *Nature*, or reſult from the ordinary courſe of things in *Society*; and which we cannot, by any care or foreſight of our own prevent, are ſo many, and make ſuch deep impreſſions upon the Soul, that ſhould we, at our leaving this World, take a true *eſtimate* of all the *common* events that have happened to us in it, there are very few of us, who, upon a juſt balance, would find *the Good* to exceed *the Evil*. The truth of which reflexion needs no proof, becauſe it is matter of general obſervation and complaint.

If we propoſe to be happy any other way, than what *Religion* preſcribes; we ſhall certainly create to our ſelves much more trouble, than what we were by *Nature* expoſed to; or

what we are otherwiſe like to receive from our *Brethren*. This is alſo an obſervation confirmed by plenty and variety of examples: Nothing that happens in Life being more notorious, than the particular Calamities which *the Sins* of men bring upon them, and which are the natural effects and conſequences of all *vicious* deſires and enjoyments.

And, as a large ſhare of human Miſery, is peculiarly owing to *Vice*; ſo hath *Virtue* alſo its proper Troubles and Afflictions belonging to it. For ſuch is the preſent condition of our Souls, with relation to the influence of the *Body*, and the impreſſions of *Education* upon them, that virtuous diſpoſitions are not eaſily acquired. It coſts us a great deal of pains and trouble to form right judgments of things; and a great deal more to rid our Minds of ſuch Errors and Prejudices as had taken deep root there, and had been long uſed to the Soil, before our Reaſon was capable, either of preventing, or removing them. And afterwards, when *Reaſon* has taken its proper place, and exerts its due authority, we cannot, without ſome ſtruggle and reluctance, obey its commands: Be our convictions never ſo ſtrong, our *inclinations to Senſe* will be always putting in their claim to be heard;

and they cannot always be contradicted, without great uneaſineſs. And, ſhould we be able to govern our own Inclinations, we ſhall ſtill find it hard to bear up againſt *Example* and *Cuſtom*; and at laſt, whatever reſolution we put on, we ſhall be often diſturbed in our courſe, and meet with many a rude ſhock from Men of contrary principles and deſigns.

What is there then, that can countervail all theſe troubles and afflictions, ariſing from *Nature*, *Society*, *Virtue*, and *Vice*? For every Man, almoſt, has his ſhare of all theſe, more or leſs. He that hath attained to the art of virtuous living, hath the faireſt title to Happineſs, and commonly the largeſt poſſeſſion too; but all the natural advantages that he receives from his conduct, together with the pleaſing conſciouſneſs of his own attainments, though they may outweigh any other kind of Happineſs, that man is capable of here, yet will never prove an equivalent for all the pains, troubles, and afflictions, which, according to the common courſe of this World, muſt fall to his ſhare: So that the beſt, and moſt virtuous men upon earth, when they come, at the cloſe of Life, to make up the account of what they have enjoyed, and ſuffered, will have no juſt ground to ſay, upon

the whole matter, that they have been happy; and it will many times be ſo ordered, that they ſhall *be of all men the moſt miſerable.*

But, let us ſuppoſe our ſelves as happy in every reſpect, as this World can make us; let us imagine our ſelves placed in ſuch an advantagious poſt, that no pain or trouble can reach us, no joy or pleaſure paſs by us; yet even here, *Security* and *Continuance* will ſtill be wanting; and we cannot think of theſe defects in our ſtate, without loſing the reliſh of every thing elſe that we enjoy. Nay, the greater the Happineſs is that we are poſſeſs'd of, the more deſirous ſhall we be, to be aſſured of its continuing always the ſame; and the more painful will our fears and apprehenſions be of loſing it. And, ſince we cannot poſſibly have theſe *deſires* of our Souls anſwered, nor theſe *fears* removed, while all our hopes are confined within the narrow bounds of this ſhort and uncertain Life, we can never be truly and compleatly happy, but in ſome *future State*, which ſhall be *endleſs*, and *unchangeable*. From whence it plainly follows, that, if there be no *other Life to come*, we live here to no purpoſe; becauſe there is no *true Happineſs* belongs to man in this Life,

but

but what the certain proſpect of *future bliſs* affords; and there is *no other end* imaginable beſides *Happineſs*, worth our living for.

And thus we may truly and ſurely argue; becauſe we are ſo well acquainted with our own frame and conſtitution, and with all the circumſtances of our condition in this World, as to know, that, if there be nothing to be expected after our departure hence, we have juſt reaſon to complain, that we entered into Life at all; that we had any proſpect of what is agreeable to our Nature, any taſte of what is good for man given us; ſince we do not only receive no ſuitable fruit of all our labours here, but are compaſſed about with pains and ſorrows, without any hopes of their ever ending in ſatisfaction.

What were the ends of Providence in the other parts of the Creation, by the imperfect knowledge we have of them, we are not able to determine; and therefore we cannot, as profane Reaſoners do, affirm, that ſome of them are *of no uſe*; and that others are *irregularly* and *unskilfully put together:* But this we are ſure of, that, whatever purpoſes the reſt of God's creatures were deſigned for, they are none of them capable of complaining that they were *ill contrived*, or *made in vain*, beſides

Man.

Man. Can *the clay ſay to him that faſhioned it, why haſt thou made me thus?* or can *veſſels of diſhonour* murmur and repine, becauſe they were not *made for honour?* No certainly! no queſtions or complaints of this kind can come from any order or degree of Beings known to us, within the whole compaſs of the Univerſe, but from the poor unhappy race of Mankind. And therefore, it cannot poſſibly be believed, or conceived, that God would put it into our power, to expoſtulate with him, for having made and faſhioned us after ſuch a manner, and not find a way to ſatisfy all our objections; or that he ſhould not be able to juſtify his Providence to every Being, that is in a condition to find fault, either with his works, or his appointments.

III. But, the *vanity* and *abſurdity of human Nature*, without the conſideration of a *future State*, will farther appear; by obſerving, that all the *common judgments of Mankind*, relating to their *being* and *conduct* in this World, which have hitherto been eſteemed *unqueſtionable*, if there be *no future State of rewards and puniſhments*, muſt be pronounced *falſe*.

Whether

Whether there be any *other State* hereafter, or no, we are ſure of our *preſent being*. And by the ſame experience are we convinced, that we depend very much upon our own care and foreſight for the continuance, eaſe, and comfort of our Life while we do live. For we are not governed and directed by *natural inſtincts*, or irreſiſtibly determined by an *overruling Providence*, as other Creatures are; who all go the neareſt and ſureſt way to their ſeveral *ends*, without having any *proſpect* of them; and make uſe of the moſt proper *means* of obtaining what is neceſſary for them, without knowing what it is to *chooſe*. But we have a Principle within us, called *Reaſon*, by which we our ſelves *judge*, what end is moſt proper for us to purſue; and which is the likelieſt and beſt way of ſucceeding in our purſuit.

The *general end of Man* is certainly *Happineſs*, or the *actual enjoyment of perfect eaſe and pleaſure*. This is what all men are by *Nature* diſpoſed to aim at; and which their *Reaſon*, when duly exerciſed, preſents to their view, and powerfully recommends to them. But, as we have ſeen before, the greateſt part of Mankind, either through neceſſity, ignorance, or deſpair, take up with leſſer degrees of Happineſs, and a lower ſtate of being,

ing, than what they are naturally capable of procuring for themſelves; and thoſe that carry their deſigns as far as their proſpect of good reaches, always find themſelves baffled and defeated in their expectations.

Since therefore *perfect Happineſs*, neither is, nor can be enjoyed in *this Life*; the firſt conſequence which this reflexion ſuggeſts to us, ſeems to be, that we ought to expect, and ſearch for it *in another*. But, if there be *no other State* to be expected; then it immediately follows, that we ought to make the *beſt of this*. And ſurely we cannot be diſappointed here too; though we cannot arrive at perfect Happineſs, yet 'tis reaſonable to believe, that we ſhould be able to make ſome advances toward it; or at leaſt, that we ſhould not conſpire to make our condition worſe than it is in it ſelf. But, ſuppoſing *private Men* may be miſtaken in their aims, as 'tis plain they often are, we ſhall think it juſt to conclude, that the *publick Reaſon of Mankind*, muſt be a true guide; that *general Principles* will hold good; and that we cannot *all* follow one another conſtantly in a falſe track. And yet, upon a careful examination of things, it will be found, that, if we lay aſide the conſideration of *another Life*, the common notions,

tions, upon which men have always acted, and the ſettled meaſures of human Conduct, which have always obtained in the World, and which ſeem to be the immediate dictates of our Nature, are all entirely wrong; as I ſhall plainly ſhew from a few notorious inſtances.

Now 'tis certain, that theſe are look'd upon as unconteſted Principles in Life; *viz.* that *it is better* TO BE, *than* NOT TO BE; that *it is more for our real advantage to take* REASON *for our principal guide than* SENSE; that WISDOM *excelleth* FOLLY, *and* KNOWLEDGE *is more deſirable than* IGNORANCE; and that *it conduces more to the happineſs of Mankind, to live in* SOCIETY, *under* GOVERNMENT *and* LAW, *than to live wild in a pure ſtate of Nature.* Theſe, I ſay, have always paſs'd for unqueſtionable Truths: and in all places, and all ages, the beſt, and wiſeſt of Men, (as they have ever been eſteemed) have been influenced by them accordingly: And yet, as the World is now ordered, if there be *no future appointments for Man*, theſe Principles are all falſe; and it would be much better for Mankind, to take quite other meaſures than they now do: as will evidently appear, from a

diſtinct conſideration of each Principle by it ſelf.

1. To begin with the firſt: Every Man, whatever his condition be, ſeems to be fond of *Life*, and to rejoice in his *Being*. This he takes care to cover, and ſecure from all manner of inſults, which threaten him from without, and from all diſorders that may ariſe within his own Conſtituiton. And ſuch a mighty Bleſſing do we account it *to live*, that we endeavour all we can *to multiply our being*, and *to continue our race* upon the Earth. Private men glory in their *numerous iſſue*; and the grandeur and intereſt of Nations are made to conſiſt in *the number of their People*. And the ſame care and concern that we all have for *our own Lives*, we extend alſo to *thoſe of our poſterity*. But, very falſe and abſurd are all theſe notions and deſigns, if there be *no other World* but this. For were it poſſible for us, before we ſet out upon the ſhort pilgrimage of Life, to view all the ſtages through which we were to paſs, and to be fully informed of all the adventures we were to meet with in our way; which of us would chooſe to endure ſo much, and enjoy ſo little, without any other proſpect, but that of returning to the ſame ſtate from whence we

came? How few are there to be found of thoſe, who have gone through half their journey, that would be willing to travel over the ſame road again? And if, in the vigour of our age, we look back upon what is paſt, without taking any pleaſure therein; what joy or ſatisfaction can it afford us to look forward, when our *days are like a ſhadow that declineth*; when the appetites and *deſires* of man begin to *fail*; when all his faculties are decaying, and the whole frame of his being is mouldring away?

And indeed, let us take man in what light, or what poſture we will, we ſhall ſoon perceive that he hath no great reaſon to be pleaſed with his *being*. For, whatever time of life it be with him, and whatever condition he is in, he is ſeldom or never ſatisfied with what *he is*; but is always deſiring and ſtriving to be ſomewhat that *he is not* at preſent. The greateſt part of Mankind in all ages, are placed in ſuch circumſtances, as fall very much below the common notion of *worldly Happineſs*; and theſe are always hoping and endeavouring to mend their condition, and always dye before they have compaſſed it. And, of thoſe who abound in the good things of this World, there are very few that are

contented with their portion, and enjoy quietly what is provided for them: But, as they are capable of forming to themſelves notions of much *greater Happineſs* than they have yet experienced, or indeed, than it is poſſible for them to attain to; ſo are they commonly employed in ſuch purſuits after it, as Death only can convince them are fruitleſs and vain. And, in ſhort, thus it fares with Mankind in general; we are continually delivered over from hope to hope, and from one vain expectation to another: Were but this evil removed, were but this difficulty conquered, then we ſhould be happy; but ſtill, as theſe go off, new evils, and new difficulties immediately ariſe. Could we but reach the top of yonder hill, we ſhould touch the Sky; but, as we advance toward it, we find the Sky at the ſame diſtance from us as before. As ſoon as this River is all run by us, we ſhall get over into pleaſant vales and meadows: but let us wait never ſo long, the River ſtill keeps his courſe. Such are the common cheats and impoſitions that we put upon our ſelves, in order to make the burden of Life ſit eaſy upon us; and thus Life ſlides away from us, before we are reſolved where to pitch our tents; ſo that very few are able to ſay, in any part

of their journey, *it is good for us to be here*; and none of us can think, at our going out of the World, that it was worth our while to come into it.

Where is then the advantage of *living?* or what hath our *being* profited us; when the *Happineſs* for which we were made, and, which is the conſtant object of all our wiſhes and endeavours, is either never found, or never enjoyed; ſo that we may all ſay of human Happineſs in general, what *Solomon* ſaid of the covetous Man's wealth; *What good is there to the owners thereof, ſaving the beholding of it with their eyes?*

And, if none of us that *already live*, have any reaſon to value Life, or to be pleaſed with our Exiſtence; why do we go on to ſtock the World with *new inhabitants*, when the fuller it is, the fewer opportunities ſhall we all have of being happy; and the more likely ſhall we be to oppreſs and devour one another? The *rich and mighty*, who have the largeſt ſhare of the World, as it is, are commonly the leaſt contented with their lot of any men whatever: on the contrary, they make it their whole ſtudy and buſineſs, to *join houſe to houſe*, and *to lay field to field, till there be no place*. The *Kings* and *Princes* of the Nations, who

bear

bear the chief rule over the Children of Men, are generally endeavouring to extend their Dominions, and increaſe their Power, by deſtroying their brethren, *that they may be placed alone in the earth.* And thoſe, who are ſtraitned by the encroachments, and cruſhed by the tyranny of theſe invaders, are conſtantly diſpoſed to ſeek their own ſafety and enlargement, by the ſame ruinous methods of Rapine and Spoil, War and Deſolation. And what other reaſon can be given of this unhappy Conſtitution of human affairs, but that the number of men upon the earth is ſo great, that they have not all room enough to live at their eaſe, and to provide for their own Happineſs, as they think fit, without joſtling and diſturbing one another? The beſt way therefore to conſult the *general Happineſs of Mankind*, would be, that the Rulers of every Kingdom and Countrey in the World, ſhould do, as *Herod* did formerly at *Bethlehem*, *ſend forth and ſlay all the young children that are therein*; and that it ſhould be made a ſtanding Law over the face of the whole Earth, that all, which ſhall hereafter be born, ſhould be immediately delivered from the Cradle to the Grave. For, by this means it would come to paſs, that all, who have any reliſh of Life, would

would be enabled to live as comfortably as they could expect to do *at preſent*; becauſe they would then be ſure that their condition would be always improving: and they could have no care or anxiety *for the future*; becauſe they would have none but themſelves to provide for. Then the certain proſpect which every man would have of enlarging his poſſeſſions and enjoyments, without injuring, or intrenching upon any of his neighbours, would make all men eaſier and kinder to one another. And then would it be more deſirable for us all to cheriſh Life, and to make our ſtay here as long as we could; when every man had the ſame glorious hopes before him, that the greateſt Conquerors ever entertained, *viz.* either to divide the World with a few, or to get it all to himſelf. But the trueſt and moſt glorious good, that might be brought about this way, would be; that in a ſhort time there would be an end put to the *moſt ridiculous*, and *the worſt contrived* race of beings that ever appeared in Nature; and that all their *Vanity*, *Folly*, and *Miſery* would periſh with them.

But this, we muſt own, is an extravagant, and impracticable Scheme. For *the deſire of Life*, *affection to Children*, and *concern for Poſte-*

Poſterity, are Paſſions too ſtrong to be maſtered; and, let the World be never ſo ill ordered and diſpoſed, every body is reſolved to ſtay as long as he can in it, and to *leave his ſubſtance to others*, whether he have any farther views for himſelf or not.

2. Suppoſing therefore, that there is *no other Life*, and we muſt live here in the manner we do; what muſt we do next, in order to make the moſt advantage we can of *this State?* Muſt we take *Reaſon* for our *Guide*, or ſhall we deliver our ſelves up to the conduct of our *Senſes?* Shall we raiſe and improve the faculties of our Minds, and look out for *ſpiritual* ſatisfactions; or ſhall we keep our underſtandings low, and ſuffer our Minds to be wholly employed about *earthly* and *carnal* Objects? Great and honourable things, I know, have been ſaid *of human Reaſon*, and a mighty privilege it is generally eſteemed to be a *rational Being:* But if there be *no World to come*; if we have no *better Countrey to deſire*, or *ſeek for*, than this; our *Reaſon* will be of very little uſe to us here: For, if we have all of us *our portion in this Life*; we ſhall then have nothing elſe to do, but to take care of our *Bodies*, and to *make proviſion for the Fleſh*, either to ſupply the neceſſities, or

to

to fulfil the luſts thereof. Our Souls will then have no diſtinct intereſt of their own to purſue; and it will not be worth our while to cultivate and improve our *Reaſon*, only in order to miniſter to the *Animal Life*. *What ſhall we eat? What ſhall we drink? And wherewithal ſhall we be cloathed?* This will be the only care and concern of the bulk of Mankind; and thoſe who have *Goods* already *laid up* for them, have no other directions to give their *Souls*, but to *take their eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry.* And what great need is there of exerciſing our noble faculties of *thinking, reflecting*, and *reaſoning*, for all this? *Nature* alone is ſufficient to excite us to procure what is neceſſary, and to enjoy what is proper for us; and all the ſagacity and contrivance requiſite for theſe ends, are within every man's reach: They are common Talents, which grow up with us, without much care and trouble to improve them; and when advanced to the height, fall very ſhort of *the natural inſtinct* of other Creatures. For neither are *we* capable of providing ſo well for our ſubſiſtence, as *they* do for their own; nor are *our* ſenſual ſatisfactions as true, and perfect, as *theirs* are. *Reaſon*, I confeſs, hath endeavoured to

make up theſe defects, but moſt commonly to no purpoſe: For, generally ſpeaking, all the projects and devices that men have conceived, for bettering their worldly condition, either by heaping and amaſſing together more than *Nature* requires, or by procuring ſuch things, as have no relation at all to *the welfare of the Body*, give them a great deal of unneceſſary trouble and diſquiet, while they are carrying on, and always end in diſappointment at the laſt. And the ſame ill ſucceſs do they meet with, who make uſe of their *Reaſon and Underſtanding*, to heighten the enjoyments of *Senſe*; for, inſtead of being regular and temperate in their Pleaſures, as *Nature* directs, and as they commonly are, who obey the calls and reſtraints of their natural appetites, without ever reaſoning upon them; their way is, to abandon themſelves to ſuch an irregular and extravagant ſenſuality, as palls and deadens the deſires they intended to gratify; brings upon them more pains and calamities than ever they were born to; and weakens and impairs the whole frame and conſtitution of their Beings.

If therefore we have no other Life to truſt to, but this; neither hath *Reaſon* any other concluſion but this to make for us: *Let us*

eat,

eat, and drink, and riſe up to play; let us enjoy the good things that are preſent, for to morrow we dye: But if we live till to morrow; *to morrow ſhall be as this day, and much more abundant.* Let all other thoughts and reflexions be baniſhed from our Minds; let not the remembrance of things paſt, or the apprehenſion of things to come, diſturb our preſent reſt: Let no ſpecious pretences to knowledge, carry us out of the common road of Life, in queſt of ſome diſtant and uncertain good that does not belong to us; and let us, as much as it is poſſible, forget that we are *rational Beings.*

'Tis true indeed, we ſhall then be *counted as Beaſts*, and *reputed vile in the ſight* of thoſe, who value themſelves upon the *dignity* and *perfection* of their *reaſonable nature.* But, what if we are? If *all are of the duſt, and all turn to duſt again; what prehemineence hath a man above a beaſt?* And, if *as the one dieth, ſo dieth the other*; why ſhould not the Life of the one be alſo like the Life of the other? If we *all go to one place*; why ſhould we not all go the ſame way to it? And why ſhould not the ſame proviſions and accommodations ſerve us, while we are journying thither?

Thus may we juſtly argue, if we think fit to make uſe of our *Reaſon* at all. And ſuch, we ſee in fact, is the common eſtate of *the Sons of Men*; in nothing better than that of *the Beaſts*, and in many reſpects much worſe. But this, ſay the wiſe and learned part of Mankind, is owing purely to their *Ignorance*: For, were their Underſtandings enlightened with proper knowledge, and their REASON *duly exerciſed, to diſcern between good and evil*, true and falſe; they would deſpiſe ſuch a poor wretched Life of *Senſe*, as now they lead; they would turn their thoughts to nobler and worthier purſuits; and they would have a juſter reliſh of *rational* ſatisfactions. And ſo indeed they would, did they carry their views into a higher and more *ſpiritual* ſtate than this: But, without ſuch a proſpect, they had much better continue in their Ignorance ſtill; they had better *walk on* ſtill *in darkneſs*, than be conſtantly dazled and deceived by falſe lights, which play about them for a while, and then vaniſh for ever. For, if there be no other *Wiſdom*, or *Knowledge*, but *of this World*; we ſhall then have juſt reaſon to ſay, *It is good that the Soul be without knowledge*: And that which *Solomon*, who knew the moſt of any man living, hath aſſured

aſſured us of, we our ſelves ſhall find to be true; that *in much wiſdom is much grief*; and that *he which increaſeth knowledge, increaſeth ſorrow.*

3. The truth of this reflexion, which contradicts another of thoſe eſtabliſhed Principles before-mentioned; that *Knowledge and Wiſdom are always to be preferred to Ignorance and Folly*, will plainly appear, if we conſider the ſeveral branches of *humane Knowledge*; to our progreſs in which we owe the title of *learned*, and to the uſe we make of them, for our own benefit, the character of *wiſe men.*

Now, the firſt and moſt neceſſary part of *Wiſdom* (as it is commonly eſteemed) is *to know our ſelves:* But what advantage can we reap from this kind of Knowledge, when, after the utmoſt ſearch that we have been able to make, we ſhall be forced to add to whatever other truths we have learn'd, this one certain concluſion; that *all is vanity and vexation of ſpirit*? What pleaſure could we take in ſearching into *the Hiſtory* of all the irregular Paſſions, wild Deſigns, falſe Hopes, groundleſs Fears, and unaccountable diſappointments of Mankind? Or, ſhould we enquire into *the preſent times*, and find that *theſe* are no *better than the former*; and that we our ſelves

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ſelves are made juſt like our Fore-fathers; and are ſubject to all the ſame diſpoſitions and events; what eaſe, or entertainment, would ſuch a diſcovery afford us? And what comfort would it be to us, after all our enquiries, to know, and to be aſſured, that we have no other portion or inheritance but this; that *the thing which hath been, is that which ſhall be*; and *that which is done, is that which ſhall be done*; *and there is no new thing* to be expected for ever?

If, in the next place, we turn our thoughts to *the contemplation of God*, and endeavour *by ſearching to find out the Almighty*; what ſhall we get by all the diſcoveries we are able to make? If *God* be not *our Maker*, *our Father*, and *our Redeemer*; if all that we can learn of him be only this, that he rejoiceth in his own Perfection and Happineſs, without having any regard or concern for us; what a terrible aggravation muſt this be to the preſent ſenſe we have of our miſery, to know, that *at the right hand of God there are rivers of pleaſure for evermore*; but that we ſhall never be admitted to taſte the leaſt drop of them: And, that *to him belongeth power*, whereby he is able to exalt us to a better ſtate, and yet that he will never reach out his

his hand, to *lift us out of the mire and clay?* But, if *God* be the *author of our beings*; if *he made and faſhioned us, and gave us this Soul*; and it is he alſo that will *bring us unto duſt again, from whence we ſhall not return*; our knowing this, will only furniſh us with matter of expoſtulation and complaint. We ſhall then be diſpoſed to *turn our ſpirit, againſt God*, and ſay, *wherefore haſt thou made all men in vain?* Then will every one have reaſon to cry out, as *Job* did; *Wherefore was light given to him that is in miſery, whoſe way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? Why died I not from the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghoſt, and no eye had ſeen me! Then ſhould I have been as though I had not been, I ſhould have been ſtill and been quiet, I ſhould have ſlept, then had I been at reſt.* Theſe are the thoughts which anguiſh and deſpair will be apt to ſuggeſt to us: But, if ſuch reflexions are unreaſonable, and unjuſt; if it be inconſiſtent with the *Wiſdom* of *God*, to create any thing in vain, and with his *Goodneſs*, to give trouble and affliction, without any hope of recompence; then muſt we conclude, that *there is no God*; or at leaſt, that *he is not the Creator and Governour of the World*; becauſe there

there are no tokens, either of his Wiſdom, or Goodneſs, to be found in *Man*. And therefore *Man* could not derive his Being from God. And, if *Man*, who is, in many reſpects, the moſt perfect of all the Beings we are acquainted with, be not the workmanſhip of God, it is not reaſonable to ſuppoſe that *any thing elſe* is.

Such will be the reſult of all our thoughts concerning *God*, upon a ſuppoſition that there is no future State of Life appointed for men. And what relief would it be to us, in this caſe, to look abroad and ſurvey *the World without us?* To what purpoſe ſhould we then conſider the Heavens, and the Earth, and all the glorious Beings that are therein? And of what uſe will it be to us, to examine into the wonderful contrivance and diſpoſition of the Univerſe, when the utmoſt knowledge we can gain by all our ſearch and ſtudy, will be reduced at laſt to this one melancholy truth; that there is nothing in the whole compaſs of Nature, either *irregular*, or *miſerable*, but *Man?*

Happier therefore, much happier are they, who never trouble themſelves to know any thing, either of *God*, or *themſelves, or other Beings*; but uſe and enjoy *whatſoever is before*

fore them, without *asking any queſtion*, either *for conſcience*, or curioſity *ſake*: Who carry on the buſineſs of Life in the way they have been taught, and accuſtomed to, without enquiring after any other; and who go down to the Grave, without ever conſidering whither they go, or what ſhall be after them.

4. And, if theſe obſervations hold; it will be eaſy to make good what follows, *viz.* that *if we exclude the conſiderations of Religion, and a future State; it would be more for the real advantage and happineſs of Mankind, in other reſpects, to live in a State of pure ſimple Nature, without Government and Law, than to unite into ſeveral Bodies, under civil Conſtitutions.*

This I am ſenſible will appear very ſtrange at firſt view; becauſe, both the *real* and *ſuppoſed* advantages of Men's living together in *ſociety*, are ſo conſpicuous, and are thought ſo neceſſary to our well-being; eſpecially when the ſtate of rude and ſavage people is conſidered at the ſame time; that we cannot imagine our ſelves capable of any *happineſs* or *eaſe* without them. The vaſt improvements of Knowledge, the great variety of Arts and Employments, and the many ſurpri-

zing Inventions that are made uſe of for *convenience*, *pleaſure*, or *defence*, are within every body's notice, who lives in a civilized, well governed Countrey. And therefore, to affirm that any people, who want all theſe things, can be happier than they that enjoy them, muſt ſeem at firſt, to moſt Perſons, a *hard ſaying*, which they are not able to bear; though, upon farther reflexion, and a juſt compariſon of both ſtates, I am apt to believe it will prove very true.

For, if we conſider men in a *ſtate of pure Nature*, without any extraordinary art or power among them; we ſhall find, that their *appetites* and *deſires* are *fewer*, and *more regular* than ours; that they aim at nothing beyond the mere *neceſſaries of Life*; and, that what they account neceſſary, lies in a very narrow room, and is purchaſed with very little *labour* and *care*. *Pride*, *Envy*, and *Malice*, are hardly known among them; and when their immediate wants are ſupplyed, they have but few occaſions to *quarrel* with one another, becauſe there ſeldom happens any ground for competition.

'Tis true indeed, they are very *ignorant*: but herein (as it plainly follows, from what hath been ſaid upon a former head) conſiſts the

the chief part of their *Happineſs*. For by this means they are free from all ſtinging *Reflexions* upon what is *paſt*, and from all uneaſy *apprehenſions* of what is *to come*. Their thoughts are wholly taken up with *the preſent*; and, whatever trouble or calamity befall them, they never make it worſe than it is, by laying on frightful colours. Neither are they ſubject to any of thoſe numberleſs afflictions and torments, which men, even of the higheſt condition, in the *civilized* part of the World, create to themſelves, by *impotent Deſires*, *imaginary Fears*, *unneceſſary Cares*, *fruitleſs Sorrows*, and *irregular ways of living*.

In what reſpects then can it be ſaid, that our condition is preferable to theirs? There are, I confeſs, in every *Society*, ſome Perſons to be found, who, by living pretty evenly and regularly, according to the dictates of their improved Reaſon, do not only take greater pleaſure and ſatisfaction in themſelves; but, by a right uſe and application of all the external conveniencies of Life, do raiſe their happineſs to a higher degree, than any man can attain to in a mere *natural State*: But even theſe men, if they carry their thoughts as far as they ought to do, will be very un-

eaſy under the certain conviction that they muſt ſoon *dye*, and ceaſe *to be*, and *to be happy* together: And their Souls will be diſquieted within them, when they find, that, after all the advancements they have made in knowledge, they are able to give no better account of themſelves. This is ſuch a reflexion, as will puzzle and torment them every time it comes into their Minds: And therefore, in order to have a true reliſh of thoſe advantages, which they enjoy above their *rude* and *barbarous* Brethren, they muſt in this point have recourſe to the ſame *Ignorance*, and want of thinking, which ſaves theſe poor people from abundance of that pain and uneaſineſs, which the thoughts and imaginations of politer men are continually raiſing in them.

But there are very few, who come ſo near being happy, as I have now ſuppoſed ſome to be. For, the greateſt part of thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed by the large ſhare they have of the outward *ornaments* and *conveniences of Life*, as well as *capacities* and *opportunities of Pleaſure*, are not content with what they have, but are always careful and ſollicitous for more: They are always diſtracted with envy and grief to ſee others better provided;

and

and they continually meet with occaſions of jealouſy and reſentment, from the deſigns and behaviour of thoſe that fear or envy them: So that, ſome way or other, they are conſtantly expoſed to ſuch troubles and inconveniences, as men that want all theſe extraordinary advantages are perfect ſtrangers to: And therefore, notwithſtanding the *outward figure* and *appearance* they make, they are *really* and *truly*, all things conſidered, *more miſerable* than thoſe deſpiſed Creatures, who live without either *Law*, or *Government*.

And, as to the *poor* and *labouring* part of Mankind, which make the bulk of every Society, they are in no reſpect eaſier or better in the condition they are in, than they would be in ſuch a ſtate of Nature as is before deſcribed. For they do but juſt live now; they have but little more beſides the neceſſaries of Life belonging to them; and it is with continual labour and toil that they eat their bread; which is never got ſo *eaſily*, and is ſeldom enjoyed ſo *ſecurely*, as it is among thoſe people, who appear naked and deſtitute of all things; and yet, having wherewithal to ſupport themſelves, are happier than the others; inaſmuch as they live *free*, and *without care*, and have no apprehenſion of *want*, *loſs*, or

oppreſ-

oppreſſion ; all which, the leſſer people of every Nation conſtantly dread, and almoſt as conſtantly endure.

There are therefore, even in the beſt and *moſt regular Societies*, but a very few, who enjoy the advantages of ſuch conſtitutions of living, in compariſon of thoſe that would be as happy without them. And, when there is a *rude, arbitrary, and unskilful Tyranny* ſet up ; (as this is the caſe of the far greateſt part of the World now under Government) the generality of the people, in all theſe Countries, are evidently more *miſerable* for being *united* together into *Bodies* under *Governours*, than they would be if they *lived wild*, and ſought their bread in deſolate places ; as would plainly appear, were the Subjects of every *arbitrary Government* in the World, allowed to draw up a faithful repreſentation of all the amazing hardſhips and miſeries they endure.

Much more might be offered, for confirming the truth of this reflexion ; as the many *painful and hazardous methods of gain*, the many ſtrange *acts of cruelty and deſtruction*, and the various ſorts of *unnatural vice and depravity*, that have been invented and practiſed in thoſe places, which have had the reputation of being moſt *civilized* and *polite*, and

and where *Learning* and *Knowledge* have been at the greateſt height. But I am well aware of what might be here objected; that to inſiſt upon proofs of this ſort, is to argue againſt *the common ſenſe of Mankind:* And therefore, all that I ſhall add farther, in maintenance of what I have been now urging, ſhall be, to ſhew, that *the common ſenſe of Mankind*, as far as we are capable of learning what it is, or what it would be, if proper tryals could be made, will juſtify all the reaſonings before uſed.

Now to prove this point by *experience*, I am ſenſible is a very hard task; becauſe it is very difficult for one man to enter into the experience of another, eſpecially in matters of pure *taſte* and *reliſh*; as all ſorts of *pleaſure* and *happineſs* are. But the following caſes will give us the greateſt light we can expect. Should we ask any of the meaneſt and pooreſt members of that much admired *Conſtitution*, under which we live, whether they would be content to quit that wretched laborious way of living they are here condemned to, and be tranſported into a *wild*, *lawleſs* Countrey, there to range free and uncontrouled, ſeeking for food and ſhelter in the ſame manner as the ancient Natives do; I am confident we ſhould find

find but very few, who would be willing to make ſuch an exchange; not only becauſe they had been long inured to poverty and hard labour, and were fearful of any new condition, leſt it ſhould prove worſe than their own; but becauſe they are fooliſh enough to be pleaſed with the *Riches*, *Plenty*, and *Honour* of the Nation they belong to, though they have not the leaſt ſhare themſelves in any of them.

And, ſhould the like offer be made to any of thoſe *Savages*, that are found in ſeveral remote parts of the Earth, to change *Countrey* and *Condition* with our poor People; it would be impoſſible, I believe, to perſuade them to bear all the *labour* and *confinement* that would accompany ſuch a change. Nay farther, there is very good ground to conclude, from experiments already made, that they would prefer their own way of living, to the eaſieſt and beſt condition we could place them in. Hitherto then *experience*, as far as we can judge, ſeems to favour equally both ſides of the queſtion. The only way therefore to try this matter fairly, and throughly, is to ask the *rich*, *the learned*, and *the great*, whoſe circumſtances are eaſy, and whoſe underſtandings are improved, which of the two ſtates of

Life before-mentioned they ſhould be diſpoſed to chooſe, were they under a neceſſity of chooſing one of them. And here I will not put the hardeſt caſe poſſible, though it takes in great numbers, whether they had rather ſpend their whole lives in *Mines*, *Galleys*, or *Priſons*; but, what is common to the greateſt part of every Society, whether they had rather earn a poor ſcanty proportion of bad food and raiment, by conſtant hard labour, and bear all the other uſual inconveniences and hardſhips which attend a neceſſitous Family; than live in ſuch a *wild ſtate of Nature*, as is here recommended to their choice. Now, if there are very few, or none, of ſuch a character, in any Society, who would not make this latter ſtate their option; then is it reaſonable to conclude, that this is the more eligible condition of the two, the *wiſeſt* and *happieſt* part of Mankind being judges: And very few certainly there are, who would not thus chooſe for themſelves, had they nothing elſe but the *eaſe* and *happineſs of this Life* to determine them.

But on the other ſide, if theſe things be conſidered, with regard to *Religion*; it muſt be allowed, that without *Society*, *Law*, and *Government*, there can be but little or no Re-

ligion any where in the World; becauſe, without theſe helps, man is capable of but very little *Knowledge*. By theſe means therefore is the knowledge of *God* and *Providence*, of the *Rules and Duties of Life*, and of *future Rewards and Puniſhments*, preſerved, propagated, and enforced among us. And *Government* is, in the nature of it, ſufficient for this end, though not for *the preſent happineſs* of Mankind, (as hath been already ſhewn): It is, I ſay, ſufficient for this end; becauſe, if due care were taken by *Governours* and *Magiſtrates*, to inſtruct their People; every body, of what condition ſoever he be in any Society, whether *rich* or *poor*, *baſe* or *honourable*, is capable of knowing and doing his duty to God, ſo far as he is not wanting to himſelf; and thereby of obtaining that *Happineſs in another World*, which every man ſeeks for here in vain.

And upon this view likewiſe, all the *other Principles* before laid down will prove to be *true* and *juſt*. For, if *this World be a paſſage to a better*; then will it be worth our while *to go through it*, whatever troubles and inconvenience we meet with in our way. If we have a *Kingdom prepared for us*, which *fleſh and blood cannot inherit*; then will it be love

behove us to take more care of our *Souls*, than of our *Bodies*, and to prefer *ſpiritual* things to *carnal*. And then alſo will *Knowledge be pleaſant to the Soul*, and we ſhall *love light rather than darkneſs*; when the more we know, and the farther we look, the larger will be the proſpect, and the ſtronger the aſſurance we ſhall have of that *heavenly bliſs*, which is *the crown of life*, and *the recompence of the reward* promiſed by God, to *them that diligently ſeek him*.

Thus doth it evidently appear, from all the variety of proof, which *the being*, and *attributes of God*, *the nature and condition of Man*, and *the preſent ſtate of things in this World* can furniſh us with; that *the true end of Man*, *and the only reaſon of human Life aſſignable*, *is to ſerve God here*, *in order to enjoy the Happineſs he hath prepared for us in a future State*. Let us now look back, and conſider the whole argument together. Can any of us ſuppoſe, that man was made at all adventures, *without any end or deſign?* Can we be ſo abſurd as to believe, that we were framed and faſhioned *without any Knowledge or Wiſdom* in our *Maker* or *Cauſe* of our Being; and yet that *we* ſhould have *Know-*

ledge and Wiſdom enough to diſcern this, and to find fault with our being put ſo ill together? Were this the true caſe, that man was *made by chance*; then it follows, that he ought to *live at random*. If no Wiſdom or Reaſon were employed *in the compoſition of his Being*; none are neceſſary *for the government and direction of his Life*; but, as he was made at firſt, ſo ought he to be conducted all the while he continues in being; that is, by *external impreſſions* and *occaſions*, without any care, or foreſight of his own, and without pointing and directing his actions to any end whatever. But this is ſuch a flat contradiction to common ſenſe and experience, that even thoſe, who aſcribed the *original of Mankind*, as well as every thing elſe to *chance*, have thought it neceſſary however that *man* ſhould *live according to reaſon*. In conſequence of which opinion they have acquainted us with what ſeemed to them the trueſt, and moſt proper *end of human Life*; they have given us likewiſe a great many *rules* and directions for the ſurer attainment of it; and have very gravely recommended *Wiſdom* and *Virtue* to our choice. But how inconſiſtent are theſe things with their main principle? For if, in the preſent ſtate of our Being, we

cannot

cannot help owning that *Wiſdom* belongs to Man; and that there is ſome certain *end* which he ought to aim at in all his actions; much more reaſon is there to believe, that he was formed and faſhioned at firſt by ſome *wiſe* and powerful *Author*, *wonderful in counſel, and excellent in working*; there being nothing in the conduct and regulation of human Life, which is any ways anſwerable to the skill that was ſhewn in making man. Nay, ſo much plainer, and more undeniable are the tokens and indications of *Wiſdom*, in *the frame and compoſition of Man*, than in *the preſent ſtate and condition of his living* in the World, that ſome of thoſe, who, from *the wonderful contrivance of the World*, and particularly of *humane Nature*, were forc'd to conclude that *there was a God, who created all things*; afterwards, when they obſerved how *unequally* the affairs of Mankind were managed, how much *folly*, and *vanity*, and *miſery*, they were all ſubject to, and how little *profit a man hath of all his Labour*, and *Knowledge*, and *Virtue*, *wherein he hath ſhewed himſelf wiſe under the Sun*; even theſe very Men, I ſay, were, from this only conſideration, tempted to deny their Maker; chuſing rather to believe, that *time and chance*

happeneth

happeneth to all things, than that God ſhould make man in wiſdom, and yet ſuffer him to *ſpend all the days of his vain Life as a ſhadow*, without ever *knowing what is good for him*. And herein have they juſtly reaſoned, were all our hopes and expectations confined to *this Life*. But thoſe who have conſidered the nature, and circumſtances of man more exactly, have acknowledged the Wiſdom of the whole Diſpenſation; for, as from *the perfection of Man's Being*, they have been obliged to own, that *God was his Creator*; ſo, from *the imperfections of his preſent State*, they have been neceſſarily led to infer, that God hath appointed ſome other and better ſtate of Life for him.

And indeed there is no middle way to take in our reaſonings upon this ſubject. For, *every thing concerning man*, muſt either *happen by chance*, or *be wiſely ordered*. If Man was *made by chance*, it is ridiculous to talk to him of *the ends of Life*; and to preſcribe *rules* and *meaſures* for his conduct. *Thinking*, and *reaſoning*, and *chuſing*, are actions that do not belong to him: And his whole Life muſt then be ſuppoſed to be one continued dream, where a variety of vain images, and uſeleſs agitations, ſucceed one another,

till

till the ſleep of Death cloſes the Scene. But if there be any *Wiſdom* diſcernible in the *frame of man*; then was he certainly *made by God, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift:* And if he was made by God; he muſt be made for ſome *wiſe end* and purpoſe: and that end muſt needs be ſuch as is *agreeable to his nature*, and ſuch as is *attainable*; or elſe he could not be *wiſely made*; nor conſequently could *God* be the *Author of his Being*. Since therefore it is manifeſt that Man, with all his knowledge and underſtanding, is *not capable of obtaining that end*, which is proper and agreeable to his nature, *in this Life*; it neceſſarily follows, that *God hath appointed ſome other ſtate for him*. For it is impoſſible to conceive, either that God ſhould have *no end in making Man*; or that he ſhould *make him utterly incapable of obtaining that end for which he deſigned him:* That he ſhould give him capacities that could never be filled, and inclinations and deſires that could never be anſwered; that he ſhould deceive him with falſe hopes, amuſe him with the proſpect of good things at a diſtance, which he could never reach; and ſuffer him all the days of his Life to *labour for the wind*, and to *weary himſelf for very vanity*. It is not

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in reaſon to be thought or imagined, that God ſhould lead all Mankind (as the Scriptures tell us he did *Moſes)* through a Wilderneſs, and then carry them to the top of a high Mountain, and ſhew them a *Land flowing with milk and honey,* and not permit any of them to ſet their foot thereon, or to taſte of the fruits of it: This, I ſay, is no way reconcileable to any notions we have of God; unleſs it be allowed at the ſame time, that there is ſome *recompence of reward* provided for men in another World; that there is a *Heavenly Canaan* preferable to that on Earth, and a *Jeruſalem above,* which is far more glorious than that below.

Theſe things then being laid together, it is very evident, either that *there is a future State*; or elſe that *we were neither made by God, nor made to any end or purpoſe at all.* And, if *Reaſon* be permitted to have any weight or authority in determining this point, there can be no doubt which is the *moſt reaſonable* concluſion of the two.

For how can we go about to perſuade our ſelves, by *rational* arguments, that our *Reaſon is of no uſe or advantage to us?* How can we ſuppoſe that all men ſhould be conſtantly employed in enquiring and ſearching for

for what none of them can find? And what can induce us to believe, that *Knowledge* and *Wiſdom* ſhould carry us farther off of the chief end of Life, than *Ignorance* and *Folly*; that the beſt ſtate a man can be in, is to know nothing of himſelf; and that all the improvements and perfections of Mind he is capable of, will only add *vexation* to *vanity*? And yet, if there be *no future State*, theſe are conſequences not to be avoided; as hath been ſhewn more at large throughout this diſcourſe.

But on the contrary, upon a *future proſpect*, how do all the difficulties of *divine Providence*, and *human Nature* clear up before us? If there be *another World*, in which men ſhall *live for ever*, and where they ſhall be for ever *happy*, or *miſerable*, according as they order their behaviour *here*; then is it eaſy to account for all the ſeemingly unequal and irregular diſpenſations of *this State*. For then it will appear, that man was *made for an end* that is worthy of him, and every way *ſuitable to his nature*; ſuch as will anſwer all his deſires, requite all his Pains, and exceed all his hopes. Then will the *way of Life lye plain* before our face; and we ſhall be delivered from all that *uncertainty* and *diſtraction*, which the various propoſals of our own Reaſon, and

the different ſentiments of other men, are now continually raiſing in us. *Knowledge* and *Virtue* will then approve themſelves to our minds, as real and neceſſary perfections: we ſhall be ſenſible of the *pre-eminence of the Soul above the Body*; and the dignity of our whole nature will be vindicated. When the troubles and calamities of this World lay hold of us, and even when *tribulation ariſeth* for *Religion* and *Virtues ſake, we ſhall not be offended*; becauſe we know that our *light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory:* We ſhall think it no hardſhip to deny our ſelves *the pleaſures of Sin for a ſeaſon*, when we are ſure that *the joy which is ſet before us*, ſhall continue for ever: Neither ſhall we look upon this as any objection to Providence, that, upon ſome occaſions, the *wicked* ſhould *in their Life-time receive good things*, and the *righteous evil things*; when we know that *in the Life to come, theſe ſhall be comforted, and the other tormented.* In ſhort, whatever ſtate or condition we are in, or however the affairs of the World are ordered, the comfortable aſſurance of *a future State* will fix and eſtabliſh our Minds, and give us *peace* and *reſt* on every ſide.

It is therefore of the utmoſt conſequence to us, to be ſatisfied whether there be any *other World* or not: For, upon the determination of this point depend all the iſſues of human Life. All our notions and ſentiments of things will be different, and all our actions will run in a different chanel, according as we *believe*, or *disbelieve*, a *future State*.

If we are perſuaded that there is no ſuch thing, then it matters not how we came hither; nor which way the courſe of this World is ordered; nor what manner of Life we chooſe, or are thrown upon. For in this caſe all the colours of *good* and *evil* will be confounded, and the marks of *truth* utterly defaced: It will be all darkneſs about us, and we muſt grope out our way as well as we can. What inclinations we feel in our ſelves, thoſe we muſt gratify; and the Paſſions that prevail moſt, muſt be ſuffered to reign; and whatever appears to be for our prevent *convenience*, *pleaſure*, or *intereſt*, that we muſt purſue, till we meet with ſome rub in our way, which turns us into another track. Upon this ſuppoſition every man's conduct will be as wiſe as another's; and, whether a man change his way of living, or continue the ſame courſe, it will be all one: We have but

a ſmall ſpot of ground to cultivate, and every man may ſow what he likes beſt in his own garden; for the care and toil will be much alike to all, and every one will at laſt receive the ſame fruit of all his labours.

But on the contrary, if we are fully convinced that God hath made us, and deſigned us for another Life; *what manner of perſons ought we to be in all holy converſation and Godlineſs?* Then will *Religion* be our whole buſineſs and employment, and all our paſſions and affections muſt yield to *the love of God.* Then will there be *one thing neceſſary*, and all our care and concern muſt be ſpent in the purſuit; there will be *one* thing *of great price*, and we muſt ſell all to purchaſe it. We muſt then look upon our ſelves as *ſtrangers* and *pilgrims* here, who *ſeek a better countrey*; where the ſtate and condition of our being will be in all reſpects very different from what it now is, or can be, and where we ſhall dwell for evermore; and conſequently we muſt make it the chief end and deſign of *this Life*, to fit and prepare our ſelves for a better; conſtantly *reaching forth unto the things that are before*, without being *let* or *hindred* by any of the things of *this World*, *the faſhion* of which *paſſeth away and the luſt thereof.*

All

All that remains then to be conſidered by us, is; whether it be more *reaſonable* and *comfortable* to believe that we are *mortal*, or *immortal* creatures; and which is the wiſeſt and moſt becoming choice a man can make, to deſire and endeavour to be *like God*, or to be content with being *like the beaſts that periſh*.

And who is there among us, ſo fond of *mortality*, as to chooſe the latter part? Which of all the children of men can, with the full conſent of his mind, deſire to *periſh for ever*, and be pleaſed with the thought that he ſhall *go down to the grave, and come up no more?* Can the *rich* man be willing to quit all his goods and poſſeſſions in this World, without having laid up for himſelf any treaſure in another? Can the *wiſe*, the *mighty*, and the *honourable* men of the Earth, who have been endeavouring, all their Life-time, to ſtretch themſelves beyond the common meaſure of humanity, be content to draw in their wings, contract their figure, and be gathered to the common heap of duſt, without any hopes of being ever diſtinguiſhed again? Can the *ſenſual*, and *voluptuous*, whoſe end is pleaſure, wiſh and deſire to be in ſuch a ſtate, where they are ſure to loſe all their taſte and reliſh

of

of every thing that is good and delightful? Nay, is there any man upon earth ſo *miſerable*, as freely to reſign his whole being, and all his intereſt in it for ever, while he hath any likelihood, or poſſibility left of being compleatly and eternally happy after this ſhort Life is ended? No certainly; it is impoſſible for any men whatſoever, to find the leaſt *comfort or ſatisfaction* in believing that they ſhall *periſh altogether*; but ſuch only as are at the ſame time convinced in their own breaſts, that, if there be *another Life*, *miſery* will be their portion in it: Which is ſo far from being an argument againſt a *future State*, that nothing can confirm us more in the belief of it. For, if the *wicked* cannot help *condemning themſelves*; if they cannot but think it reaſonable that they *ought to be puniſhed*; (as'tis evident they do, when they are afraid of *a Judgment to come*) it muſt be likewiſe as reaſonable to believe, that they ſhall receive what they deſerve, and that *the ſentence* which they have paſt upon themſelves, being *juſt*, *ſhall* ſometime or other *be executed* upon them. And ſurely there is as much ground to *hope* for a *future State*, as there is to *fear* it: if there be a *God that judgeth in the earth*, *verily there is a reward for the righteous*; and if

there

there *may be a Hell*, there *muſt be a Heaven*.

Let us not therefore hearken to thoſe vain and malicious deceivers, who, becauſe they deſpair of having any *part in the book of Life*, reproach their *Maker*, diſgrace their *own nature*, and do what in them lies, to *deſtroy the hope of man*, and to involve all their brethren in the ſame ſtate of *perdition* with themſelves.

Let us rather hearken to the voice of *reaſon* within us; whereby we are aſſured that we are *the workmanſhip of a wiſe Being*, who ordereth every thing to ſome proper end and purpoſe. Let us conſider *the dignity of our nature*, and the pre-eminence of man above all the other ranks and orders of living creatures upon earth; and let us reverence our ſelves accordingly, and make a due uſe of the privileges we enjoy, in full hope and expectation of being advanced to a *higher condition* hereafter.

Let us, to whom are now committed *the Oracles of God* delivered to the *Fathers*, remember what is there revealed to them, that we were *created in the image of God*, and were formed and faſhioned for *his glory*; and let us endeavour all we can to preſerve that

likeneſs wherein we were made, and to anſwer the *end* of our great *Creator*.

But we, who are called *Chriſtians*, and have plainer promiſes, and nobler hopes to encourage us, than any of the *ancient Fathers* had; we, to whom *Life and Immortality are not* only *brought to light*, through the *Goſpel*; but are ſo *fully*, and in ſo *lively* and *affecting* a manner ſet before our face, that there can be no doubt now remaining what our *end* will be, we have certainly all the obligations in the world to *preſs toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus*.

Therefore, *My beloved brethren*, let us *be ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as* we *know*, and are aſſured, from the united teſtimony of *Reaſon* and *Revelation*, *that* our *labour* will *not be in vain in the Lord*; but that, *in due ſeaſon, if* we *faint not*, we *ſhall reap everlaſting Life*.

AND thus having finiſhed the Proof I intended, and brought it into as narrow as compaſs as I could, I ſhall cloſe my diſcourſe, with an addreſs to thoſe, for whoſe ſake I chiefly deſigned it, *viz.* to the *Unbelievers* of this Age and Countrey, whatever other ſtyle or denomination they take to themſelves, or is beſtowed upon them by the World.

You are the Perſons, whom I earneſtly deſire to conſider and examine what is here advanced; and from whom I expect, that this grand Article *of a future State*, ſhould be either *confirmed, or confuted.* In order therefore to debate the matter freely with you, and, to bring it to a ſhort and certain iſſue, give me leave to obſerve to you, in the firſt place, how I have treated the ſubject, and what ſort of proof I have inſiſted upon.

I have not multiplied words without cauſe; or amuſed you with nice and obſcure reaſonings. It is but *one ſingle* argument I have made uſe of, to demonſtrate this important point; and, that *a natural eaſy* argument, which every man is a capable judge of; and all the reflexions and obſervations brought to ſupport it, are immediately taken from *human Nature*, and from *the preſent State of the*

World; which are parts of Knowledge that lie open to every man, who will either *look into himſelf*, or *look about him*.

I have not entertained you with a Philoſophical Diſquiſition concerning the *Immateriality* of our Souls; though this alone hath been thought ſufficient by many Learned *Heathens*, as well as *Chriſtians*, to eſtabliſh their *Immortality*. And you your ſelves plainly acknowledge the force of the argument, by labouring all you can to deſtroy it.

I have not urged *the authority of men* to you, notwithſtanding we have *numbers* and *antiquity* of our ſide. I might have preſſed you with what all men of ſenſe and reaſon, in every diſpute, where it can be offer'd, lay great ſtreſs upon; and that is, *the general conſent of Ages and Nations*. I might have inſtanced, as *Tully*, and other great Philoſophers have done, in many *ancient* and *univerſal cuſtoms* that have obtained throughout the World, even in ſome of the moſt barbarous parts of it; which were plainly founded upon the *belief of a future State*, and *the expectation of Immortality*. But I choſe rather to appeal to *your ſelves* only, and to call upon you to conſult your own breaſts,

and to obſerve what paſſes in the World in your own time.

I have purpoſely declined all the evidence of *Divine Revelation*; becauſe you are pleaſed to queſtion, whether any Knowledge can be conveyed this way; and are apt to impute every thing that goes under this name, or character, to *Prieſtcraft*: Though 'tis evident, from the very nature of the thing, that *Religion* muſt be older than *Prieſtcraft*; and all pretences to *Inſpiration*, *Miracles*, *Spiritual Authority*, &c. do manifeſtly ſuppoſe an antecedent belief of a *God*, and the obligations of Mankind to obey him, upon the proſpect of *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*. But, waving all pleas of this kind, it is *Reaſon* alone that I have made the judge in this diſpute; even *your own Reaſon*, that *Idol*, which you have ſet up in oppoſition to *God*, *the giver of this perfect gift*.

And now, let me ask you freely, what objections your *Reaſon* can ſuggeſt to you, againſt the Doctrine of a *future State*.

Several Perſons have (as we ſay) *come out of their graves, and appeared unto many*, and by *ſhewing themſelves alive* again, have given *infallible proofs* of the reality of *another ſtate of Being*. But no man can have

returned from the Grave, to tell you that he *is no more*; that his *Soul is vaniſhed as the ſoft air*; and that he hath no ſenſe or remembrance of any thing left. You cannot therefore be *ſure* that you ſhall periſh utterly, from any information or intelligence of this kind.

What *pobable arguments* then can induce you to *believe* that this will be your fate? What *agreeable views* or proſpects can diſpoſe you to *hope* for it?

Does *the Nature of Man* appear to you ſo perfect, as not to want, or to be capable of farther improvements? Is *the courſe of this World* ſo regularly ordered, that there is nothing to be mended in another? Or is it inconſiſtent with the *Majeſty*, *Wiſdom*, *Goodneſs*, or any other *Attribute* of *God*, to lengthen out the Being of Man, and to give him more Knowledge and Happineſs than he now enjoys? No certainly! there is nothing within the compaſs of this World, that can lead you to conclude that there never ſhall be any other.

The utmoſt of what can be advanced by the moſt determined Infidel, is only this: That, notwithſtanding all the fair appearances of the truth of a *future State*, 'tis poſſible, after all,

all, that there *may be none*. And, in order to make out this *may be*, three other very hard ſuppoſitions are neceſſary: *viz.* That 'tis poſſible *matter may think*; that the Soul, though it ſhould be *immaterial*, *may* nevertheleſs *be mortal*; and that there *may* perhaps *be no God*. But, 'tis plain that the two firſt of theſe ſuppoſitions can ſignify nothing at all without the third; becauſe, if *there be a God*, all the reaſons before urged for a future State will be concluſive, whatever *the nature of the Soul* be.

For, if *the Soul* be *a diſtinct principle* from *Body*, there is no doubt but God is able to preſerve it in a *ſeparate ſtate* of Being, when the Body is diſſolved; or he can prepare *another Body* to receive it; or he can re-unite it to *the ſame*, as he ſhall think fit. But, ſuppoſing what we call the *Soul*, be nothing elſe but *a ſpark that moves in the heart*; God can keep alive that ſpark for ever, with the ſame eaſe that he firſt kindled it. If man be only a *Machine*, a mere piece of *Clockwork*; *God*, who made this Machine, can put it together again, when broke and crumbled into duſt, and ſet it a going in the ſame manner as before. If we conſider only what *may be*, there is no arguing againſt *the Almighty*.

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And, if an *Almighty Being* hath any other Attributes, beſides *power*; (as to be ſure he hath) from every other perfection that belongs to him, we may eaſily conclude what *will be*, or what it is *reaſonable* to expect *ſhould be*. For, if there be any *Knowledge*, or *Wiſdom* in the Moſt High; if there be any *Juſtice* or *Goodneſs* in him that *gave us this Soul*; he muſt certainly have ordained *another ſtate of Life* for us: or elſe we ſhall be forced to ſay, that a *wiſe*, *juſt*, and *gracious* Being, of *infinite Power* and *Knowledge*, hath *made all men in vain*; which (as hath been fully proved in the foregoing Diſcourſe) it is impoſſible for us to conceive or imagine.

But let us ſuppoſe farther, that *there is no God*, that is, no ſuch *intelligent* Being, as is juſt before deſcribed; and that nothing elſe is meant by that word, but what is otherwiſe ſtyled *Nature*: The ſame abſurd conſequence will ſtill return upon us. For no Philoſophy will allow that *Nature* ſhould do any thing *in vain*; and yet, if there be no *future State*, all *the works of Nature*, however *great*, *regular*, and *beautiful* they may ſeem at preſent, would then be found to be made *to no purpoſe*. The ſtructure and diſpoſition of the Heavens,

Heavens, and of the Earth, together with all that variety, and order, of Beings contained in them, which is now the ſubject of our admiration, will, upon this ſuppoſition, appear to us more abſurd and ridiculous; than if there was no *Firmament* yet made, if *the Earth was* ſtill *without form and void*, and *darkneſs* continued *upon the face of the deep*. For what greater abſurdity can be imagined than this, *viz.* that *the Heavens*, and *all the Hoſt of them*, ſhould be formed and faſhioned in the manner they are, for the uſe, contemplation, and delight of *Man*, whoſe *Spirit goeth downward to the Earth*; that *lights* ſhould be ſet *in the firmament of Heaven*, to be *for ſigns, and for ſeaſons, and for days, and for years*, to poor wretched *mortals*, only to enable them to compute the number of their labours, to meaſure the length of their pilgrimage, and to ſee and behold with their eyes, as well as underſtand with their Hearts, that *there is no profit under the Sun*; and that *the Earth* ſhould be *given to the children of men*, that they might *eat of it with ſorrow all the days of their life*, and then *return to the ground from whence they were taken?* Had *Babylon*, the *Glory of Kingdoms*, been built for no other end but to be a *habitation*

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for Dragons, and a Court for Owls; that *wild beaſts of the deſert* might *lie there*, that her *houſes* might be *full of doleful creatures*, and *Satyrs dance in her pleaſant palaces*; all the *ſtrength*, *beauty*, and *grandeur* of the place, and all the *art*, *skill*, and *power* that were employed in building this City, would only have ſerved to heighten the *folly* of the author and contriver of ſuch a ſtupendous work. And much more ridiculous muſt all this glorious Fabrick, which we call *the World*, appear to us, ſhould we ſuppoſe that the deſign of the whole contrivance was, that the *beaſts of the field*, and *the fowls of the air*, might range to and fro, and *ſeek their meat*, and take *their paſtime therein*, till they *dye and return to their duſt*. And what is man, that more regard ſhould be had to him in framing the plan of this World, than to any other *moving creature that hath life*, if *that which befalleth man befalleth beaſts*, and his *laſt end be like theirs?* If the *Heavens* were not made to *declare* to us *the Glory of God*, and to raiſe our thoughts and deſires to *things above*; if God did not *create us in the beginning for his Glory*, and *form us for himſelf*; and, if *after worms have deſtroyed this body*, we ſhall not *ſee our Redeemer ſtand at*

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the latter day upon the earth; then will it be proper for us to remove this whole ſcene of things from our thoughts, as no way worthy of our contemplation; and as having leſs concern and intereſt in the Heavens, and in the Earth, and in the whole Œconomy of Nature, than any of our fellow creatures, who uſe and enjoy what is needful for them, without the folly of *admiring*, or the uneaſineſs of *complaining*.

From whence then can you be furniſhed with reaſons againſt *the Immortality of Man*, when, without this ſuppoſition, all the *works of Nature* appear to human underſtanding to be *vain*, and *unaccountable*; and, on the other ſide, when all the objections you can poſſibly raiſe againſt *God*, and *Providence*, may be fairly urged as ſo many proofs of a *future State?*

And, if no *probable reaſons* can be found to induce you to *believe* that *there is no future State*, what can diſpoſe and encline you to *hope* there is none?

Suppoſing we were all of us to *periſh intirely, Soul and Body*; what ſatisfaction could this thought give us? *Quid habet iſta res aut lætabile aut glorioſum?* What matter of joy or triumph could this afford us?

That wiſe and learned Heathen *Tully*, had his Soul ſo poſſeſſed with the expectation of *Immortality*, as openly to declare; that, were it poſſible for him to be miſtaken in his opinion, he ſhould be very unwilling to know it: he deſired to enjoy his *error*; he was afraid of being robbed even of this *falſe hope*, this *pleaſing deluſion*. And why ſhould we not all be affected in the ſame manner? Were it nothing elſe but a *dream*, a mere *viſion of the night*; yet why ſhould we deſire to be awaked out of this dream, when our waking thoughts cannot preſent us with any image ſo agreeable and entertaining as this? Could it be certainly proved to us, that there is no *future State*; we ſhould then be *as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his ſoul is empty: or as when a thirſty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his ſoul hath appetite.* For ſo do we *naturally* hunger and thirſt after *Immortality*, and are continually reaching after it, and enjoying the proſpect; that, ſhould we once be convinced that there is no ſuch thing to be expected, all our deſires would remain unſatisfyed, and our Soul would faint within us; becauſe we ſhould then find our

ſelves

ſelves deſtitute of all the proper nouriſhment, and ſupport of *thinking Beings*. Neither is this the worſt of the caſe; but, when we conſidered our ſelves as confined to this ſhort, uncertain period of Life; where we are ill provided with neceſſaries, buſied in little inſignificant employments, engaged in fruitleſs purſuits, encompaſſed with a train of evils and calamities, running to and fro in queſt of trifles, and laying ſnares, and digging pits for one another, till we all fall into the ſame bottomleſs gulph together: Such conſiderations and reflexions as theſe, would make us deſpiſe and abhor our ſelves, and *curſe the day wherein we were born*, had we no hopes, after we had *made our bed in the darkneſs*, of ſeeing *the light* again without *miſery*, and of enjoying *Life* without *bitterneſs of Soul*. And ſhall we give up all theſe glorious hopes our ſelves? Shall we make that the object of our wiſhes, which it is the firſt deſire of the Soul, and the conſtant endeavour of Nature to avoid? Let us examine our ſelves more cloſely, and ſee how we can bear the thought of loſing our whole being for ever.

Now, the beſt turn that can be given to this abſurd notion, is, that what puts an end to our being, will alſo put an end to all the

pain and *travel* we endure in Life. When we go down to the grave we ſhall find *reſt*, and *quiet*, and *ſecurity*; there we ſhall *ceaſe from trouble*, we ſhall *reſt from our labours*, we ſhall be *free from the oppreſſour*. But will not our *glory* and our *pomp ceaſe* with us? Will not our *mirth* alſo *ceaſe*, and *the noiſe of them that rejoice be at an end?* Will not all our *purpoſes be broken off*, and our *thoughts periſh?* And muſt we not quit all thoſe *views* and *proſpects* of *good to come*, by which alone our ſpirits were enabled to bear up under the *evil* that was *preſent?* And, if all this muſt be allowed, (as to be ſure it muſt) this amounts to a plain confeſſion of the whole argument; that, *if there be no future State, man was made in vain.* For certainly it would have been much better for us *never to have been born*, than to enter into Life, only to walk croſs the ſtage, or to act a ſhort part, and then appear no more; and nothing can give us a more contemptible notion of *human condition*, than to ſuppoſe, that the moſt deſirable *end* of the longeſt and happieſt Life, is to *live no longer*.

Another plea that is commonly offered in behalf of *Annihilation*, is, that this Doctrine will deliver men from *the fear of future puniſhment*,

niſhment, and make Life go off more eaſily, than it would do under ſuch a troubleſome apprehenſion. But who are they that are afraid? Are you ſo weak and fooliſh, who pretend to deny a *future State*? This is to own your ſelves to be *wicked*, and to have *deſerved* puniſhment: And how can you entertain ſuch vile diſhonourable thoughts of your ſelves? If there be a *future State*; why ſhould you not expect as good a portion in it as any of your brethren? From whence proceeds that ſecret whiſper in your breaſts, that, if you ſhould hereafter be brought before the Judgment-ſeat of God, you muſt needs be *condemned? The innocent* and *the virtuous* have no ſuch fears about them; they think of nothing but *Crowns* and *Kingdoms*, *Rivers of pleaſure*, and *everlaſting Joy*. And, when they are told of *weeping*, and *wailing*, *and gnaſhing of teeth*, *the worm that never dies*, *and the fire unquenchable*, none of theſe images terrify, or diſturb them. But, if you ſhall be found in the number of thoſe, *Qui ſe totos libidinibus*, *dedidiſſent*, *atque flagitiis ſe inquinaſſent*, *vel in republicâ violandâ fraudes inexpiabiles concepiſſent:* If you, have abandoned your ſelves to a profligate, vicious courſe of Life; or have been guilty

guilty of any villainous deſigns againſt the publick; then you do well to *fear* and *tremble* at the thoughts of a *Judgment to come*: But the beſt way to be rid of this fear, would be to *believe* and *repent*, and to *ſin no more*; and not to go about to perſuade your ſelves, that you ſhall not *for all theſe things be brought into judgment*.

But perhaps you will pretend that you are not afraid *your ſelves*; but you look upon it as a generous thing, to deliver *others* from this unneceſſary torment, and to contribute what you can to the eaſe and chearfulneſs of *Mankind in general*. But do you indeed think, that it would be better for the World to have all *fear* of *future puniſhment* baniſhed out of it? Would men be more careful of their own Honour and Reputation, more juſt and true to one another, leſs inſolent and oppreſſive in a high ſtation, or more patient and ſubmiſſive in a low condition; were they ſure never to be called to an account hereafter for their falſhood, injuſtice, cruelty, or any other wickedneſs or abomination they were guilty of here? No certainly! *the terrors of the Lord*, whether *true* or *falſe*, are not altogether *vain* with regard to the welfare and quiet of men in this World; ſince by conſtant

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experience in every Age, 'tis found, that *the dread of a Judgment to come* hath ſuppreſſed abundance of wickedneſs, which no *human puniſhments* could have reached; and a great deal more, which the fear of all that *man* could inflict, would not have been ſufficient to reſtrain.

It is better *not to be* at all, than *to be miſerable*, that muſt be granted; and conſequently, were there no other choice to be made, you have certainly *choſen the better part*. But if any *other ſtate* be *poſſible*; if we *may live again*, and *be happy*, and *continue for ever*; (as 'tis eaſily conceived we *may)* why ſhould we not deſire *Happineſs* and *Immortality in another World*, wken we are conſtantly wiſhing for them in *this*; where we know at the ſame time that it is utterly *impoſſible* to obtain either? Could we ſecure but one of theſe bleſſings to our ſelves here, we ſhould have more reaſon than we now have for looking no farther. Were we *perfectly eaſy* and *joyful* all the while we lived, we ſhould have a fairer excuſe for not *conſidering our latter end*, for not thinking of any *change* that is to *come*; or were we ſure of being *immortal here*, however the pleaſures and troubles of Life were blended, we ſhould be better juſtifyed

ſtifyed in not deſiring to quit the *preſent* poſſeſſion of a poor wretched being, where the evil is ſweetned with ſome returns of good, for a more glorious and perfect ſtate *hereafter*. But, ſince none of us can be either *happy*, or *immortal*, in this World, with what ſhew of reaſon can we pretend to deſpiſe a *future State*? Nay, how is it poſſible for us to be willing to part with all our hopes of entring upon a new Scene, after this is ſhut up? How can we be content to lay our ſelves down to ſleep, with a full aſſurance that we ſhall never wake any more? Or how can we be pleaſed to go into *the land of darkneſs*, without ever wiſhing to ſee the light again? Theſe are not *natural* thoughts; ſuch a proſpect as this does no ways ſatisfy our *Reaſon*, our *Imagination*, or our *Deſire*. And therefore it is much better for you not to think, or reaſon at all about the matter, if you are afraid of being convinced that there is a *future State*. You had much better ſhut your eyes before you come to the precipice, and leap boldly into the gulph, than ſtand upon the brink, doubting, and trembling, and looking about, and ſearching every where for arguments to perſuade your ſelves, that 'tis poſſible you may receive no harm by the fall.

The true proper views of the Soul are *Happineſs*, and *Immortality*; and no man *willingly* foregoes the hopes of either. *Mortality* can no more be our firſt choice than *Miſery*; but, if we muſt die, 'tis natural to wiſh that we may not *die*, and *be miſerable* too. And this is the genuine reſult of all, that ever has been, or ever can be ſaid againſt a *Life, and a Judgment to come*. And therefore I cannot but conclude, that, if you are men of ſenſe, and reaſon, and will give your ſelves leave ſeriouſly to weigh the argument I have laid before you, you muſt needs acknowledge that *there is a future State*; or at leaſt, that it is very *reaſonable to believe ſo*, however you may wiſh it were otherwiſe.

And, if you find your ſelves diſpoſed to yield to the proof that has been given of this Doctrine; let not this poor ſingle prejudice overbear your underſtanding, that the perſon who offers it, is one that believes in *Revelation*, though he has not taken his argument from thence. Do not refuſe to hearken to the *voice of Reaſon*, which is plain, becauſe you perceive the *hands of a Chriſtian* which you diſtruſt. 'Tis the doctrine of *Socrates*, and of *Plato*, and *Tully*, that I propoſe to you; wiſe and learned men, who never heard of

Revelation; Men that were in no reſpect byaſs'd by the *ſuperſtition* of the Countries where they lived, nor impoſed upon by *the craft* either of *Stateſmen*, or *Prieſts*; nor deluded by *the tales of Poets*. Look into their writings, and ſee with what ſtrength of reaſon they aſſert their own *Immortality*, and with what noble confidence they wait for *another Life*. Read over the diſcourſes that *Socrates* made to his Countrymen juſt before his death, and there you will perceive for what *hopes ſake* he was content to die; with what views his Soul was entertain'd, while he held the cup of poyſon in his hand; with what glorious expectations he took his leave of this World; with what joy and ſatisfaction he began his flight into the upper regions. And is there nothing of this great man now left? Not ſo much as a *Ghoſt*, or *Shade*, or any fleeting *Image* of that *exalted Soul*, which talked, and reaſoned, and acted, ſo much above the powers of a weak decrepid *Body*, which it deſpiſed, and freely reſigned to *duſt* and *corruption*? It is hard indeed to conceive; but this, and many more ſhocking abſurdities muſt be admitted, if you will deny a *future State*. For you cannot give up this doctrine, without giving up your *reaſon* at the ſame time;

without renouncing your pretenſions to all the *advantages* and *privileges of human Nature*; and without declaring, that this whole ſyſtem of things, which we call *the World*, as far as man's knowledge or concern reaches, is altogether vain and uſeleſs.

But, before I preſs you any farther to ſubſcribe to this grand article of *a future State*, I will deal ſincerely with you, and tell you, what I apprehend the unavoidable conſequence of ſuch belief will be. And it is this; that when you are once thoroughly and heartily convinced that there is *another World*, you will never be able to withſtand the proofs that are brought of *the Chriſtian Religion*; as I ſhall ſhew you very briefly.

In the firſt place then, it is plain, that *a future ſtate of Happineſs and Miſery*, neceſſarily implies ſome *preſent rule of Life*, according to which men are to order their behaviour *here*, and according to which they will be judged *hereafter*. And where ſhall we find this Rule? What *man* ſhall be allowed to preſcribe to us? Shall we take *Plato*, or *Tully*, *Seneca*, or *Epictetus*, for our guide? In their works we may find many noble ſtrokes of *Natural Religion* or *Morality*: but *the Scriptures*, by the confeſſion of all that have

read them, whether they believe them to be *from Heaven, or of Men*, contain a fuller, and more perfect draught of *Morality*, than all the *Heathen* Authors together. This being granted, there can be no diſpute, but we ſhall be better diſpoſed to ſubmit to what is there written, and ſhall take greater ſatisfaction in performing what is there required of us, if we can but perſuade our ſelves that it comes from God himſelf, from whom we received our *Being*, and by whom we ſhall be *rewarded*, or *puniſhed*, than we ſhould be, if we were to follow only the dictates of our *own reaſon*, or the directions of *other men*.

And, if we think it moſt proper to take our *rule of living* from *the Scriptures*, and endeavour all we can to conform our ſelves to *the Chriſtian Morality*; we can have no reaſonable objection againſt the doctrine of a *Saviour*, through whom we may expect to have all our *tranſgreſſions* of that rule *pardoned*, and who will render our *ſincerity*, and *repentance*, as acceptable to God as *perfect obedience*.

Neither will that which is *revealed* to us, concerning *the Reſurrection of the Body*, when duly conſidered, appear *incredible*: on the contrary, it will rather ſtrengthen the *natural*

tural notions we have of a *future State*. For, (as *Tully* obſerved in his time) the great difficulty that is found in believing ſuch a State, ariſes chiefly from hence, that it is hard to conceive how *the Soul* can ſubſiſt by it ſelf, without the *Body*: But, when we are aſſured, that, upon quitting this *houſe of clay*, there is a *glorious* and *incorruptible Body* to be put *on*, which will be every way ſuitable to thoſe *ſpiritual* faculties, the operation of which is very much obſtructed by our *preſent Bodies*, our knowledge of this great article is rendred more *eaſy* and *ſenſible*.

But I will enter no farther upon this ſubject with you; becauſe I am very ſenſible that I have already ſet before you more than you will be able to digeſt eaſily. I ſhall conclude all with this plain reflexion; that, if your luſts are too ſtrong to yield to the proofs of a *future State*, you ought to change your language, and always talk in the ſtyle of *Unbelievers*: you ſhould never, upon any occaſion, uſe ſuch words as *Virtue*, *Honour*, *Duty*, *Conſcience*, or the like; you muſt lay aſide all notions of *Natural Religion*; *Morality*, and *Juſtice*; and fairly own your true and only principles to be theſe, *viz.* that *every man may pleaſe himſelf in what manner*

ner he thinks fit; and that *every man may purſue his pleaſure, or his intereſt, whatever it be, in any way that he ſhall judge, ſafe, or expedient.* And then (if you are not very much beholden to the goodneſs of thoſe that believe another ſtate) you will be ſure to find a *Hell upon Earth*, without the leaſt ground to hope that you ſhall eſcape one *hereafter*.

FINIS.

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